A GUIDEBOOK FOR EDUCATORS ON ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

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Abstract

This content analysis explored the needs of a sample of BC public school educators in relation to determining growth and development of students with exceptionalities through methods of educational assessment. Specifically, the study sought to determine ways to support educators in assessing students with unique learning needs by determining what types of assessment resources would be most helpful. Authentic conversations were conducted with a variety of educators from the Nechako Lakes School District and a conversation analysis was conducted on the information gained. Findings from the study indicated that educators want an assessment resource that is quick and easy to use, supports the reporting process, and can be shared with colleagues or parents when discussing students. A variety of assessment templates were developed in accordance with the findings, and refer to academic, functional life skill, and behavioural domain.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Evaluating the development of students can be a complicated task, due to the variety of abilities prevalent in public school systems. This is especially true for educators who have a range of students with exceptionalities in their classroom; each with varying degrees of aptitude, adaptations, and a number of educational goals. Generally, a student with exceptionalities in the British Columbia (BC) public school system has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that may be minimally different, or markedly different from his or her peers; therefore, alternative assessments and tracking tools need to be utilized or created to monitor progress.

Assessment refers to the process of gathering data through the use of a measurement tool to determine if a student has met the pre-set standards. Assessment also indicates at which level a student can perform a given task, and it is the foundation of education that enhances instruction and promotes learning (Reynolds, Livingston, & Willson, 2009). For students with exceptionalities, learning outcomes, personal abilities, and individualized goals guide educational programming; therefore, determining progress is an essential component of providing learning opportunities. In this chapter, I will present information on British Columbian educational policies and assessment in relation to students with exceptionalities. I will discuss the rationale and significance of the project, as well as my guiding research question. In addition, I will provide a conclusion explaining my methods of data collection, and why an assessment resource for students with exceptionalities is needed. To conclude the chapter, I will give an outline of what to expect in the subsequent chapters.

Since goals are specific to an individual student, assessments should become individualized as well. Some assessments are as simple as observing student behaviour or activities and placing a check mark in a box, yet other assessments are used to gain an understanding of the degree of student knowledge, and ascertain if a specific level of mastery has been met. Whether simple or complex, quick or time consuming, student assessments are key to education (Reynolds et al., 2009).

There is a need for an assessment guidebook for educators of students who have individualized programs and require Special Education intervention. Browder, Flowers, Ahlgrim-Delzell, Karvonen, Spooner, and Algozzine (2004) stated that students with exceptionalities whose educational programming is not completely aligned with the general curriculum require some form of alternative assessment.

The purpose of this project was to create a concise, user-friendly handbook focused on assessment and evaluation for educators of students with exceptionalities. Furthermore, the resource is meant to provide insight into how assessment for students with exceptionalities can guide teachers' practices, while also providing templates and alternative assessment tools relevant to students with special needs. For the purpose of this project, the phrase "students with exceptionalities" refers to those with both high- and low- incidence disabilities; however, alternative assessment for those who are designated as gifted is not addressed in this project.

The British Columbia Ministry of Education (2011) states that, "students with special needs have disabilities of an intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional, or behavioural nature, or have a learning disability or have exceptional gifts or talents" and further reports

that "the purpose of Special Education is to enable the equitable participation of students with special needs in the educational system in British Columbia" (Special Education section, para. 1). Part of any student's success in school is based in the assessment process. Determining if a student has met the required outcomes or the goals put in place for them, and to which level he or she has achieved, are key to personalized education planning.

Even though information regarding education planning and assessment for BC public school students is available on the Ministry of Education website, the data presented are informational and do not provide user-guides to assessing and evaluating the progress of students with exceptionalities. The education of students with special needs requires teachers to be aware of how exceptional students learn best, how to evaluate Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that support the students' needs, and how to assess effectively their learning and development.

Schenck (2001) stated that the purpose of the IEP is to differentiate between individual student differences. This differentiation is accomplished through the creation and application of an educational program that reflects student strengths and needs. The education of students with exceptionalities is often more intensive than the education of typical students, mostly because there are varying levels of need and attainment for students with exceptionalities. One component of an IEP requires that educators provide evidence of evaluation and tracking of achievement in relation to the students' goals. Generally, not all classroom teachers are trained in how to assess the learning of a student with alternative needs (Schenck, 2001). A concise handbook on assessing students' with exceptionalities learning, aimed at general education teachers or new educators, enables those educators to have more independence and confidence in supporting students with exceptionalities.

As a Special Education teacher, I spend time creating templates and tools to assess the performance of students with exceptionalities in behavioural, academic, and functional skill areas. My aim is to provide access to user-friendly tools to which educators can refer, as needed, while they track and monitor the progress of students. Educational planning for students with exceptionalities is based on student skill levels and need and so, too, should assessment. I assert that assessment is the foundational measurement which provides direction to the IEP, so it is important for the classroom teacher to be able to assess development at various times throughout the school year. My assessment handbook, and the templates within, provides efficient strategies to assist teachers to work through the evaluation process. The package provides educators with the tools to gather some important information on their students, help determine how their students with exceptionalities learn best, and supply templates and tools for tracking, assessment, and evaluation in the areas of behaviour, academics, and functional life skills.

Rationale

Schenck (2001) noted that instruction is intended to meet specific student needs; therefore, assessment, which targets the distinctive learning styles, must be linked to instruction. Regarding students with exceptionalities, evaluating what and how they are learning is important, whether the skills they are focusing on are functional or academic in nature.

Before becoming a teacher, I worked as a Student Support Worker for nine years. I enjoyed this role, but decided I really wanted to teach a classroom full of children as opposed to only supporting a few. In 2007, I secured a teaching position with the Nechako

Lakes School District, and since I expressed an interest in working with students with exceptionalities, I was asked to be the site representative for Special Education at my small, rural school.

In this capacity, I was responsible for setting up school-based team sessions, running IEP meetings, and assisting teachers with adapting curriculum for students with exceptionalities. I also worked with educators to assess student achievement at various points during the school year. With each new school at which I worked, I had different teaching positions and responsibilities which lead me to realize that assessment and tracking the progress of students with exceptionalities needed to be ongoing, in order to provide an accurate picture of where a student was in relation to his or her IEP goals and objectives.

In the school district for which I work, setting goals for designated students and monitoring progress is the responsibility of the classroom teacher, in conjunction with the case manager. Due to specializing in other areas of teaching, a large number of the teachers with whom I was working were not confident in their knowledge of how to evaluate goal progress for a student with special needs, nor were they able to say what the student actually needed to achieve to demonstrate educational success. Oftentimes teachers have a number of students with exceptionalities and varying degrees of ability in their classrooms.

Over the past few years I have realized that continual assessment and evaluation of student goals is important, so that students are focusing on achievable tasks. However, it is not enough to determine if he or she has met a goal, but also important to determine what level he or she has achieved, where he or she started out, and how far he or she has come. Through colleague collaboration and experimentation, I have developed or modified some

existing evaluation tools and checklists for my students with exceptionalities. Since each student has unique abilities and needs, adaptable templates are important.

I am a full-time Special Education teacher at a Kindergarten to Grade 7 elementary school. In this capacity, I am responsible for a number of specialized tasks related to academic and social intervention for students, teacher mentorship, and I act as a liaison between community services for youth and the school. One of my responsibilities is to support teachers in creating individualized academic plans for students with exceptionalities. I assist classroom teachers with adapting or modifying materials to meet the specific needs of diverse students. Since assessment provides insight into growth and development, I provide ready-made templates for tracking goal progress, because in my experience, classroom teachers do not have tracking tools available, nor are they sure how to create materials specific to their student-assessment needs.

When an individualized program has been implemented, I continue to monitor and evaluate the education plan as well as the assessments. If warranted, I amend a goal or tracking tool so that the educational team has a method of showing what a student is able to accomplish, as well as a visual measurement of achievement. This support piece is invaluable because a general education teacher's workload is already immense. Additionally, my academic background in Special Education has provided me with a variety of tools and experience that many of my colleagues do not have. Due to the flux of student growth and abilities within each classroom, planning and assessment is an ongoing, time consuming process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this content analysis study was to explore the assessment needs of general education teachers, and support staff in relation to students with exceptionalities in BC public schools. The needs of students vary within each classroom; therefore, resources which support educators' assessment practices must also vary. Frequently, standard assessment procedures are not adequate; moreover, alternative methods need to be created.

The data I collected from my research should be used to guide the assessment practices of educators who evaluate the educational development of students with exceptionalities. General education teachers, support staff, administrators, resource teachers, and educational researchers may find the results of my analysis useful for guiding their own practices, in relation to assessing the growth of students with exceptionalities.

Research Question

Preceding my study, two underlying themes were established in relation to Special Education and student assessment: (a) getting an accurate and meaningful measure of students with exceptionalities progress and achievement requires a different definition of proficiency than that used for typical students (Kettler and Elliot, 2009), and (b) most classroom teachers are not fully prepared for Special Education structures which are prevalent in British Columbia public schools (Sacks, 2001). Considering this information, along with personal experiences, I developed a research question for this project: What are the needs of educators in relation to the educational assessment of students with exceptionalities in BC public schools?

Significance

The project I created developed out of a need to provide colleagues with information on assessment options for students with exceptionalities. Many of the teachers with whom I work inquired about the process of evaluation in relation to students with an IEP. They also wanted support to make a successful learning environment for students with exceptionalities, in a typical classroom. The majority of my colleagues have been teaching for a number of years; however, many of them asked about access to premade assessment resources. They inquired about tracking sheets or evaluation black line masters, in order to inform their own teaching, while also gaining a deeper understanding of the educational planning and goal evaluation of students with diverse needs.

Some educators have difficulty creating student-specific goals and objectives for students with exceptionalities, and thus struggle with how to determine a student with exceptionalities progress within the program set out for them. Quite often, student goals are broad and encompass a number of objectives, so having access to user-friendly assessment tools that do not take too much time, is important.

Conclusion

According to Thurlow, Elliott, and Ysseldyke (1998) educational assessment propels teaching and measures student growth and learning. Since there are a vast number of students with alternative learning needs, there also needs to be an assessment reference available so that educators can select tools they need for students who partake in specialized learning. Assessments need to be diverse, and should be conducted for the purpose of intervention planning, effect accountability, and guide educational practice. Assessment

also needs to be individualized, just as goal setting and adaptations are in place for students to achieve success. Creating new assessment tools for each component of a student's IEP is time consuming and ineffective; therefore, it is my argument that a comprehensive assessment resource for evaluating the progress of students with exceptionalities is beneficial, whether utilized by an inexperienced, or an experienced educator.

In this study, my purpose was to determine the types of resources educators would find useful to support the assessment of students with diverse needs. Over an intermittent six-week period, I gathered both qualitative and quantitative data from 41 educators who are employed by Nechako Lakes, School District 91. The educators I consulted work with a variety of students in Kindergarten to Grade 12. I manually recorded, and then extracted information from authentic conversations with colleagues related to educational assessment. My aim was to determine what types of assessment tools educators would find useful in evaluating the learning of students with exceptionalities. From the notes I collected, I was able to conduct a content analysis by colour-coding the commonalities in the information, developing categories, and then extracting overarching themes related to alternative assessment.

Outline of the Project

Following the introduction of my topic, the rationale and significance of alternative assessment, research question, and information depicting why an assessment handbook is necessary, I will present five additional chapters on the literature related to my topic, the research process, findings and results, the actual handbook, and finally, a chapter dedicated to reflections associated with the creation process. In Chapter 2, I offer insight into the data

currently available in regards to assessing students with exceptionalities, looking at summative and formative assessment, as well as Response to Intervention (RTI). In Chapter 3, I explain the research methods I used, and also the use of reflective journaling in gathering data. In Chapter 4, I explain the process of the content analysis and results that developed, I also use tables to indicate who I consulted, along with quotes to support my results. In Chapter 5, I present that actual handbook for educators to use when assessing students with exceptionalities. Finally, in Chapter 6, I offer reflections and acknowledge a few limitations as well as discuss possible avenues for future research. I conclude with a list of references.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

In Chapter 1, I introduced the concept of assessment in relation to the evaluation of students with exceptionalities, the rationale, significance, and my guiding research question, followed by factors belying the importance of a handbook for educators. In Chapter 2, I delve into current literature relevant to the types of assessment processes and current practices of educators.

In the first section of the literature review, I will discuss current methods of assessment, including summative and formative ideologies, which can provide educators with opportunities to support inclusion, and offer alternative methods of evaluation for students with exceptionalities, and should therefore be investigated. I will then address information on the Response to Intervention (RTI) method of meeting the needs of all learners in order to validate the need for my study, which is specific to the assessment needs of BC educators working with diverse students. I will speak to assessment in relation to BC curriculum, as well as accommodations relevant to students with exceptionalities, with the intention of providing information relevant to BC educators that support development through scaffolded learning opportunities for students with various abilities. Finally, I will conclude the literature review section with information on alternative methods of assessment appropriate for students with exceptionalities so that I can expose the need for alternative assessment resources as evidenced by the professional literature. The purpose of the literature review is to examine current evaluation practices, uncover areas that are lacking in appropriate assessments for students with exceptionalities, and determine what kind of resource would be suitable for present-day BC educators.

Current Methods of Assessment

Inclusion of students with exceptionalities in regular main-stream classrooms has become common since the early 1980s (Porter, 2008). The presence of students with exceptional learning needs means that differentiated instruction and assessment must occur. Taras (2005) noted that assessment is a complex process whereby educators must navigate through the step-by-step mechanics of the evaluation procedure, in order to effectuate judgment. That is to say, multiple phases are often required in order for educators to fairly evaluate student performance. In this vein, Buhagiar (2007) noted that assessment experts support the notion that assessment is an essential component to learning, and that fair, objective, reliable, and precise measures of achievement are a must. However, there is no common approach to alternative assessment methods, and little research exists on efforts to teach, and accurately assess general academic content for students with exceptionalities (Roach & Elliot, 2006).

Roach and Elliott (2006) aimed to study the correlation between access to curriculum and levels of success for students with exceptionalities. They consulted 113 elementary and secondary Special Education teachers from 36 school districts, within the state of Wisconsin. They used a stratified sample, with participants from urban, suburban and rural schools. The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of curricular access to general education settings and curriculum for students with exceptionalities. Their belief was that increased access to inclusive educational settings would result in more learning opportunities, and improve performance by students with individualized programs, as measured by the Wisconsin Alternate Assessment (WAA).

In the study, Special Education teachers were asked to identify one student who had been assessed using the WAA during fall 2003, which resulted in 47 female and 66 male representatives. Roach and Elliot (2006) used a 131 Likert-scale that required teachers to rate students' performance of a skill, or understanding of a concept, against a four-point scale: nonexistent (0), to proficient/ generalized (3), or not applicable (NA) if an item was not relevant to the student's educational needs. The WAA items assessed each student's performance in Reading, Language Arts/Writing, and Mathematics. Scores from individual items were added together to generate a four tiered achievement rating: minimal performance, basic, proficient, and advanced. Additional case-based materials for each student participant were also collected, and included a copy of the students' current IEP, as well as a curricular access questionnaire that each student's teacher used to document which WAA items were part of the student's curriculum and instruction during the school year. Also, alternative assessment protocols and supporting evidence from classroom activities were taken into account.

Roach and Elliot (2006) noted that psychometric analyses supported the validity of WAA scores, and data from the case-based sources were analyzed using descriptive, correlational, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. In order to ensure reliability, two educators had to agree on each student performance rating, or a third educator was consulted to determine the most accurate level. The results indicated that correlations exist between accesses to the general curriculum, IEP goals, time in general education classrooms, and students with exceptionalities performance. Furthermore, differentiated instruction, instructional adaptations, and small group or individual support

augment these correlations. In summation, they found that a positive correlation exists between inclusion and exposure.

Roach and Elliot (2006) acknowledged that the results of their investigation were taken from one instance and based on a non-random sample of students with exceptionalities from Wisconsin, but they suggested that the findings are generalizable, and the resulting data can be used to guide alternative assessment refinement in educational settings around the world.

Elliot, Kettler, and Roach (2008) continued their research on the assessment of students with exceptionalities, and presented their research based on the development of alternative assessments that lead to increasing accessibility through lessening the difficulty of grade-level content assessments. They considered a number of questions in their research such as, who are the students that require assessment accommodations, how can existing tests be altered and what are the effects on measurement, how can outcomes be modified and how will the process of altering standard assessments affect educators, students, parents and test developers? They consulted a number of resources including many written by the United States Department of Education, in addition to data-based evidence from a number of experimental research studies concerning the effects of modification on test performance of students with and without disabilities. They compared the data found in all of the resources, and presented their conclusions regarding each of the questions they considered.

In particular, they concluded that modified standards and related assessments measure a student's content mastery, but these assessments can be made less difficult than the original standards assessments. The researchers recommended that students who require

some differentiation, and have difficulty with general assessment standards, but do not qualify for foundational life skills assessment, can still take part in general achievements tests with a few alterations because they are making slower, but persistent progress. Additionally, a number of accommodations can be made to assessments without under representing the target construct. They stated that some ways to reduce the difficulty include, simplifying the language in the assessment, removing incorrect answer choices, highlighting key words, and making graphics clearer. However, Elliot et al. (2008) suggested that proficiency standards need to be developed that state how to demonstrate proficient performance in the areas of reading, mathematics, and science. So while educators know that changes need to be made to assessment of students with exceptionalities, progress is slow.

Assessment of learning and assessment for learning are two types of evaluation processes that educators use to determine what students have attained. Depending on the extent of the exceptionality, assessment of learning and assessment for learning can be applicable methods of evaluation for students with exceptionalities.

Assessment of learning (summative). Taras (2005) reported that summative assessment is a judgment which considers all evidence up to a given point. She explained that summative assessment is indicative of finality, and represents the end of judgment. In education, summative assessment generally takes the form of unit tests, standard examinations, written products, performance tasks, or oral products. They are the final product, and represent students' entire knowledge regarding the topic. Summative assessments are marked by educators, and a final grade is assigned to the student (Jenkins,

2010). He added that summative assessment can be implemented to establish the learning, ability, or skill level of students, which can then be used to accredit their knowledge development to a particular program of study. This type of assessment is generally used in typical classrooms at the end of a program of study.

Similar to Taras (2005) and Jenkins (2010) findings, Harlen (2007) added that summative assessments are final products or performances that are used to evaluate the achievement of students in relation to performance standards or specific criteria. She noted that summative assessment is either norm-referenced or criterion- referenced. Norm-referenced summative assessment compares what the student has produced or can demonstrate, to others of the same age, grade or experience. In criterion-referencing, standards are based on certain kinds of performance, and judgment depends on how individual students' accomplishments match with the criteria or expectations specified. The aim of assessment of learning is to summarize individual students' achievement across a period of time, in order to record and report on learning (Harlen, 2007). Figure 1 depicts the steps taken to report on individual student achievement, known as Assessment of Learning.

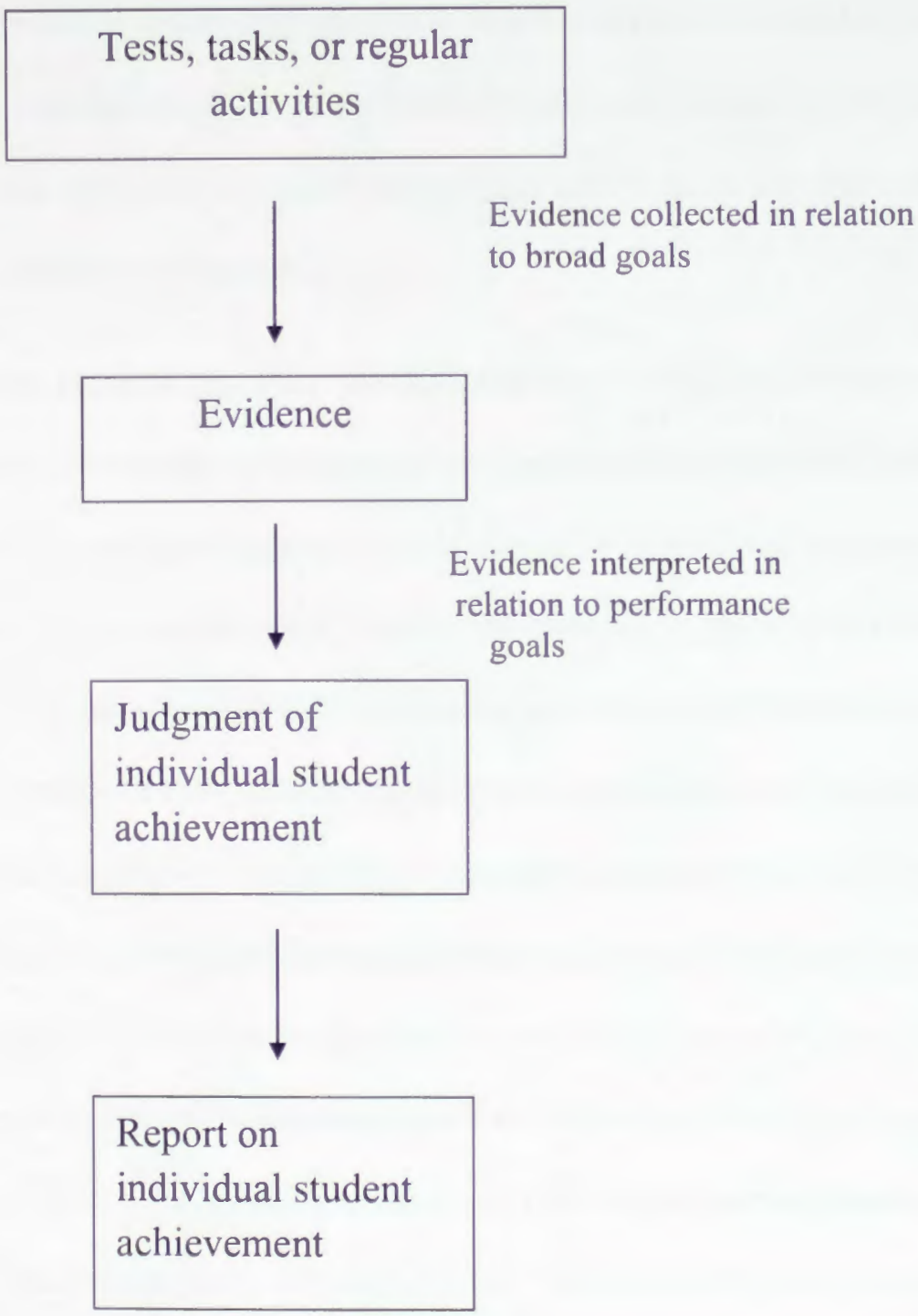

Figure 1. The steps to Assessment of Learning (adapted from Harlen, 2007)

Harlen (2007) noted that summative assessments should be fair, dependable, and have a positive role in relation to student self-awareness. She explained that an assessment needs to be as valid as possible, and that what is being assessed corresponds with the learning outcomes that were the goal of the assessment. Also, an assessment must be reliable and that the administration, along with the resulting data, is consistent and accurate.

Finally, summative assessments must have minimal impact on student self-concept. Summative assessment outcomes can be used to plan future teaching (Harlen, 2007). Since student knowledge bases are varied, assessments need to be varied, and more importantly, specific to student development.

Black, Harrison, Hodgen, Marshall, and Serret (2011) explored how teachers could enhance their competence in summative assessment in ways which might also have a positive impact their teaching and learning. Using 18 English and mathematics teachers from three schools, two-and-a-half year longitudinal study, Black et al. (2011) conducted research which aimed to address the following: (a) What would the elements of a strategy which could enhance the quality of teachers' summative assessment in ways that would be both feasible and judged to be positively valuable by teachers? (b) Would this strategy promote a positive interaction between formative and summative assessment practices? Between March 2005 and November 2007, research data was collected including teacher views as expressed through interviews and transcripts from their reflective writing. This data was analyzed using a coding scheme, and reliability in the designation of coding was cross-checked between pairs of team members. The sections that were concerned with assessment competence were selected and grouped according to the different issues raised (Black et al., 2011).

In the initial phase of the study, an audit of the information was conducted, and Black et al. (2011) discovered that summative practices between teachers varied. They also noted that teachers believed school administration were mainly interested in the results of external tests; those that the school had no say in the formulation or marking of. In relation to this, teachers felt that they were judged on student test scores, so they essentially spent a

lot of instructional time teaching to the test. Additionally, teachers did not expand their test creating skills, as they indicated that their best strategy was to copy the external testing format, so their students would be familiar with the format and also, relieve them of experimenting with alternative formats.

The second phase of the study took the form of collaborative development between the teachers and researchers. Teachers came to realize that they needed to look at new ways of judging their students' learning (Black et al., 2011). Since it was discovered that there was a discrepancy in summative assessment methods, steps to improve assessment of learning were created. First of all, participants agreed that English assessment had to be designed to have students give separate evidence of writing, reading, and of speaking and listening, whilst in mathematics, assessments should test the capability of students to apply mathematics skills to authentic problems. They noted that existing assessments do not fully cover the topics presented above, and thus undermine teachers' attempts to judge their students. Another obstacle Black et al. (2011) discovered was the ways in which teachers have students demonstrate knowledge of the curriculum. They noted that there must be a balance between homogeneity and diversity, and that each task or assessment had to be justified in relation to the aims that it proposed to assess. In summation, Black et al. (2011) proposed that the criteria for students to demonstrate a task had to be clear, and have a balance of uniformity and flexibility. Also, the summative assessments utilized needed to encompass a wide range and level of skills.

Black et al. (2011) noted that because the sample size used in their research was relatively small, any implications should be considered as guidance, rather than definitive. They also noted that all of the teachers in the study indicated they found value in

participating with colleagues and discussing an educational construct they needed to work on, and by developing collaborative assessment criteria, they realized at the end of the study that not all of the problems with assessment had been resolved.

Much like Black et al. (2011), Saliu (2005) reported that a "one size fits all" approach to assessment is not likely to be successful for determining the development of students with exceptionalities, and that assessment procedures need to be fully understood by the educators implementing them in order to be utilized to the fullest potential. Consequently, it can be difficult for students with exceptionalities to score successfully on standard tests or quizzes as they cannot always perform at the level of their peers using a normative test, which are generally designed for typical students. Since students learn, and are able to demonstrate learning in a multitude of ways, differentiated learning, and therefore differentiated assessment, is important.

Assessment, as a tool for measuring student progress, is often student-specific in Special Education. Certain concessions are made in measuring growth through evaluation methods. Determining the most suitable assessment tool for measuring students with exceptionalities progress can be difficult, depending on whether a student is on an adapted or modified program. Summative assessments, which are individualized, can be acceptable if they are created to measure what the student knows, but not as a comparative tool to evaluate against others. Harlen (2007) reported that summative assessments should not be done in place of formative assessments, but be used in conjunction with them, and, summative assessment can be conducted effectively, and without negative consequences for formative assessment.

Assessment for learning (formative). O'Conner (2011) noted that formative assessments prepare students for summative assessments, while supporting them in acquiring skills that will help them achieve performance standards. Moreover, formative assessments should be meaningful and provided frequently while also presenting evidence of student progress with descriptive feedback. According to Jenkins (2010), formative assessments promote autonomy in student development. They are conducted more casually, by evaluating what transpires in conjunction with the activity, interactions, and transactions that unfold within a classroom, and using that knowledge to guide future teaching. He also noted that formative assessment aims to improve the learning experiences of students by providing them with ideas and feedback on how they can improve what they are doing. Formative assessment is based on the continual capacity to demonstrate learning (Jenkins, 2010).

Sach (2011) explored teachers' perceptions of formative assessment. She wanted to investigate the range and nature of teacher perceptions and determine whether a relationship existed between the perceptions and length of teacher experience. A convenience sample was used to survey 67 teachers from 24 elementary and middle schools. Teachers were surveyed using a three-point Likert rating scale (agree; unsure; disagree), which set out to record their perceptions about a range of issues associated with formative assessment. Variables such as school level (elementary or middle) and length of teacher experience (1-3 years, 4-10 years, 11-20 years, over 20 years) were also incorporated. In addition, standardized instructions were included in the survey to provide clarity, consistency, and reliability. Data from the survey was gathered and analyzed using SPSS (a statistical analysis program in social sciences). Sach (2011) noted that the sample size was small and

had limited parametric clout, so she used the Kruskal-Wallis test as a non-parametric alternative to investigate the relationship between teaching experience and teachers' perceptions. The aim of using the Kruskal-Wallis test was to investigate whether there was a difference in teacher perceptions of assessment for learning across the four experience categories.

Through her analysis, Sach (2011) determined that 98.5% of the respondents agreed that "all children can make progress in their learning", 1.5% expressed uncertainty with this statement, and no teachers disagreed. Ninety-two point four percent of teachers in the survey indicated that "the aim of formative assessment is to promote learning", 6.1% were unsure, and 1.5% disagreed. In relation to years of teaching experience, the study showed that a statistically significant difference was evident. Teachers with over 20 years of experience had the highest overall ranking in relation to the statement "all children can make progress in their learning"; whereas teachers with 0-3 years had the lowest. Also, another statistical difference occurred with teachers with 11-20 years of experience achieving the highest score for the statement "the aim of formative assessment is to promote learning", followed by those with over 20 years teaching experience. Sach's (2011) examination of teachers' views in relation to formative assessment highlights the following important points. Firstly, an overwhelming number of teachers believe that all children can achieve progress in educational endeavours. Secondly, the majority of teachers acknowledge the value of formative assessment in promoting learning. While the study did not consult an overly large number of teachers, the study could be generalized to other teachers, and does indicate that educators with the most teaching experience accept and appreciate the benefits of formative assessment. In relation to teaching students with exceptionalities, this

information is encouraging and supports previous research that extols the benefits of formative assessment methods for guiding all student development.

Harlen (2007) stated that formative assessment includes evidence gathering during learning activities, and interpretation of a product in relation to lesson goals. She noted that progression in relation to a goal is required for interpretation to occur, and that information about where students are along the line of progression is used to indicate what the next steps are. She goes on to say that evidence of learning is used by educators to re-teach and help students take the next steps. This process helps to regulate teaching so that the pace is appropriate, and to ensure the active participation of students. Students can participate in these processes if educators are forthcoming with lesson goals and criteria with which students can judge their progress towards the goals. This notion is especially pertinent to students with exceptionalities whose educational programming is most often differentiated, and usually requires skill mastery. Supportive feedback, student understanding, and active participation is imperative to alternative programming (Taras, 2005).

Taras (2005) reported that for an assessment to be formative, it requires feedback which clearly indicates the presence of a gap between the actual level of the work being assessed, and the compulsory standard. She goes on to note that formative assessment also requires an indication of how the work can be improved to lessen the gap, and reach the required standard. Additionally, Taras proposed that formative assessment and feedback must be by applied to all areas of education and integrated into the students' learning cycles, whereby it can be used by the learner to assist with educational development and competence. Specifically, the goals of effective formative assessment and feedback allow for students to realize what they can do to improve a product they have submitted for

assessment, and also to demonstrate "the capacity to monitor the quality of their own work during actual production" (Taras, 2005). She notes that assessment for learning deletes the inefficiency of trial-and-error learning. The purpose of formative assessment is for knowledge to be gained during an activity, after the completion, and projected onto the next assignment. Formative assessment focuses on the process as well as the product (Taras, 2005).

Much like Taras' (2005) beliefs about assessment, Newton (2007) identified that the purpose of the assessment is foundational to determining the optimal design of the assessment. He noted that the target of the assessment should be to determine the level of attainment achieved by the student in each area which applies to him or her. The main purpose of formative assessment is to define the degree of mastery of a given learning task, along with pinpointing the part of the task which is not mastered. The objective is not to grade the learner, but to help both the teacher and student center on the particular learning necessary for movement towards mastery (Newton, 2007). The process of assessment for learning is effective in personalized learning programs because through the use of formative assessment educators are aware of what is known, and what needs to be worked on, which ultimately helps with goal setting and outlining objectives. Due to the positive correlation between submission of assignments, teacher feedback, and re-submission, individual or whole-group results are used by educators to identify learning needs and direct subsequent teaching and learning. Moreover, frequent analyses of attainment are informative for supporting pedagogical awareness, and are required to guide interventions and propel specialized education planning (Newton, 2007). Figure 2 shows the cycle of Assessment for Learning.

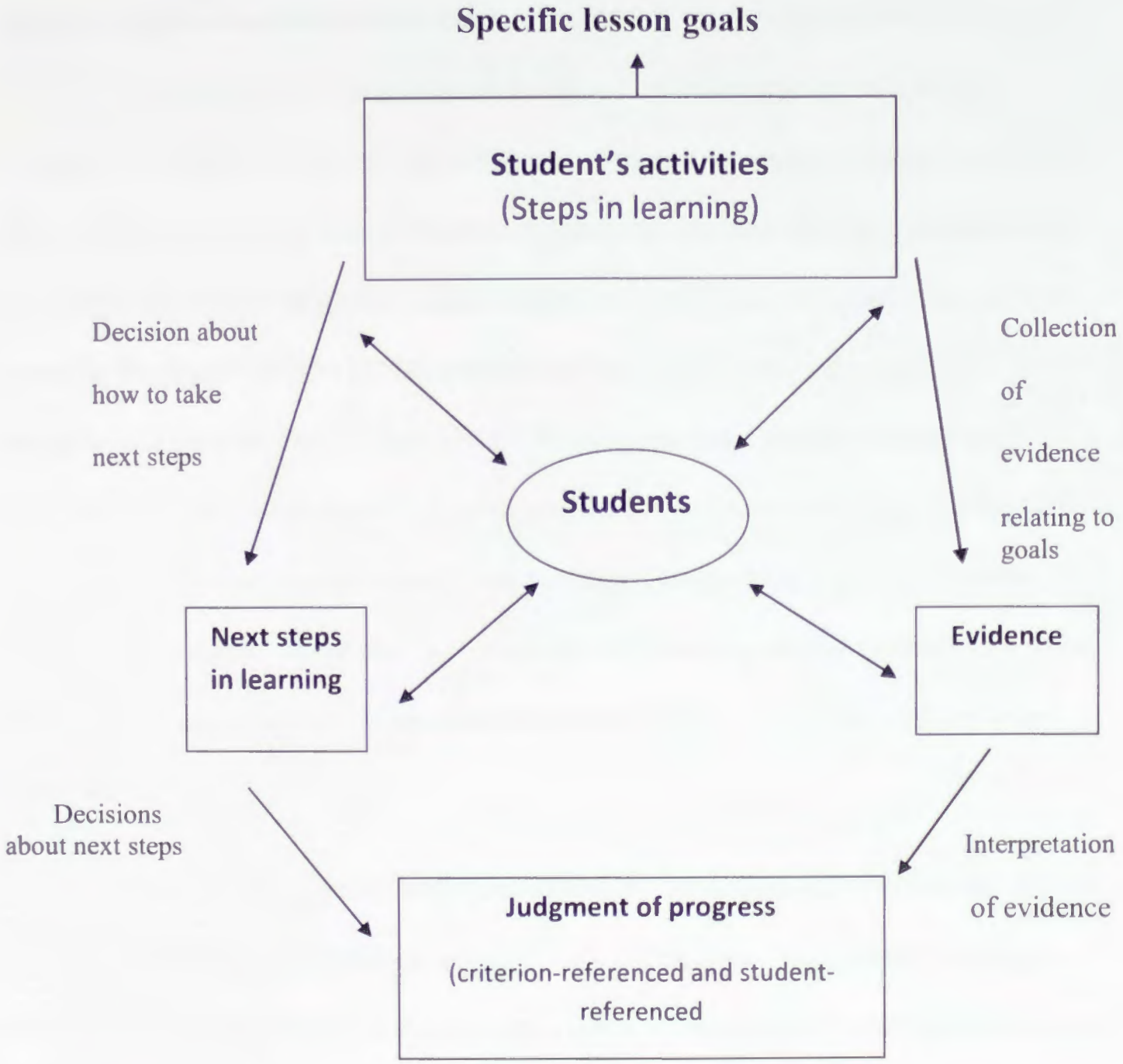

Figure 2. The cycle of assessment for learning (adapted from Harlen, 2007)

When formative assessment strategies are implemented effectively, they have proven and significant benefits for learners, and they increase the speed and depth of student learning (Black & William, 1998). Thus, the implementation of formative assessment benefits the notion of academic success for all students. Assessment for learning elicits the empowerment of students and allows them to become owners of their own learning (Teachers TV/UK Department of Education, 2009). Between 1990 and 1998, Black and

William (1998) conducted research which surveyed 250 sources which were published in the *Journal of Assessment*. They focused on the use of assessment for learning in educational settings, and showed that formative assessment is central to effective teaching. The purpose of their study was to determine if the improvement of formative assessment practices amongst teachers would raise standards of learning. At the culmination of their research, Black and William (1998) determined that all of the data indicated that strengthening the practice of assessment for learning produced sizable learning gains in students. Although Black and William did not conduct any interviews, they felt that their consideration of the available research was adequate in supporting their beliefs about formative assessment. In the end, they noted that their study provided evidence to support the need for adequate formative assessments that are specific to the tasks that are being measuring.

Assessment for learning is designed to identify the unique learning patterns of each student, using various instructional approaches to accommodate the range of learning patterns and styles, including designing instruction and assessment for students with various learning challenges and exceptionalities (Earl & Katz, 2006). Furthermore, assessment for learning is designed to give educators information to modify and differentiate teaching and learning activities. Assessment for learning, when used effectively, has a high impact on overall attainment and ensures that every child makes the progress they have the potential to make, with weaknesses identified and tackled early (Teachers TV/UK Department of Education, 2009).

Educators must be aware of the purpose of the assessment they are using, as well as ensuring that the results are used for their intended purpose (Newton, 2007; Buhagiar,

2007). Utilizing formative assessments as tracking tools in exceptional education is acceptable, and is most often used in Special Education as a method for providing a baseline for individuals. Formative assessments can also be used to generate appropriate learning goals. Assessment scores can be recorded or plotted on a graph and a progress line can depict the rate of improvement, or stagnation. Educators could use formative assessment to provide ongoing documentation as it reveals student progress or signals the need for intensified instruction.

Buhagiar (2007) stated that assessment for learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence to decide where learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there. Basically, if a positive outcome is shown, the effectiveness of instruction is assumed, and the continuation or acceleration of current programming is appropriate. In relation to a lack of growth, re-evaluation of instruction practices or goals needs to be conducted. The process of assessing student learning varies depending on student skill acquisition, and the aim of assessment is to support learning for all students (Harlen, 2007). In relation to students with exceptionalities, monitoring through continual data collection is useful to help educators become aware of changes or stagnation over a period of time. Sadler (2007) also studied and remarked on the importance of purposeful assessment. He noted that student learning is based on capacity as opposed to acquisition, and more specifically, that students have actually achieved learning if they can demonstrate something they were taught, which they were not able to before on demand, independently, and with competence.

The information above indicates that summative and formative assessment options can be used to support student development. In fact, the findings suggest that use of both

formative and summative assessment methods to determine and support student development is significant to progress. Both forms of assessment, when used by educators in appropriate instances and with balance, tend to foster the development of students, as well as increase student learning and skill acquisition (Earl, 2003). Learning, assessment, and intervention build upon each other and are therefore ongoing. One of the formal programs being used in some North American schools which methodically implements instruction, assessment, and intervention is called Response to Intervention (RTI).

Response to Intervention (RTI). Berkeley, Bender, Peaster, and Saunders (2009) noted that some school districts have begun to respond to each student's learning needs using a method of assessing and intervention called Response to Intervention (RTI). Buffum, Mattos and Weber (2012) added that RTI is initially about taking advantage of the collective knowledge and skill sets present in an educational facility. They suggest that staff collaboration is foundational to RTI success. Sanger, Friedli, Brunken, Snow, and Ritzman (2012) stated that the popularity of RTI relates to the fact that special services are provided to students through an inclusive service delivery model, as opposed to pulling students out of the classroom to provide support. Berkeley et al. (2009) explained that RTI involves a multi-step approach to providing specific interventions to struggling students. Teachers provide instruction and scientifically-based interventions, which are targeted to the needs of individual students, at increasing levels of intensity. Educators also continuously monitor the progress students make at each intervention level and use the assessment results to decide whether students need additional instruction or intervention in general education, or referral to special education services (Berkeley, 2009).

RTI models are based on three tiers (Berkeley et al., 2009; Buffum et al., 2012). The first tier is proactive and is sometimes referred to as the preventive tier, where general education teachers provide differentiated instruction and interventions universally. This tier typically addresses the learning needs of 80% of the student population, where-as students who require more intensive interventions are exposed to additional measures in tier two.

The second tier, known as the secondary intervention tier, usually involves 15% of the population and supplements targeted, intensive, small-group intervention with monitored progress, and takes place in addition to whole-class instruction (Berkeley et al., (2009). Furthermore, Werts, Lambert, and Carpenter (2009) added that tier two interventions may include more frequent instruction, additional time to complete assignments, or alternative approaches to programming and curriculum. Likewise, Buffum et al. (2012) asserted that in order for students to get what they need and be successful, classroom teachers and school-wide teams need to work collaboratively.

Berkeley et al. (2009) stated that the third tier, called the tertiary intervention tier, consists of the lengthiest, most intensive interventions and services about 5% of the student population. Werts et al. (2009) reported that this is the final level of intervention and is highly specialized for students who are significantly behind grade level. Buffum et al. (2012) added that instruction is conducted by highly trained specialist teachers for students who are significantly weak in critical skill areas of learning, which may include reading, writing, number sense, and English language. Support is embedded into the students' daily education program, however, this should not replace student access to core curriculum.

In regards to a fourth tier, Berkeley et al. (2009) reported that some educational facilities have this level of individualized learning as a step beyond the third tier and as reserved for students who are designated as special needs and placed in exclusive Special Education programs, however, they caution against RTI as a stand-alone designation tool. Buffum et al. (2012) noted that a fourth tier is not beneficial to students and if implemented, is usually designated for students with pervasive exceptionalities, which only promotes the misleading notion that Special Education is separate from the previous tiers.

Berkeley et al. (2009) stated that some models of RTI differ in terms of who is responsible for delivering interventions due to the fact that some schools lack learning specialists; however, they affirmed that instruction, as well as scientifically-based interventions are based on student need and ability, thus they increase in levels of intensity reflecting the level of the tiers present. Additionally, Berkeley et al. (2009) noted that monitoring student progress needs to be continuous and well documented. Students should have many opportunities to respond to instruction and demonstrate what they have achieved. Much of the time students who receive instruction in tier two are able to acquire the skills they need and return to tier one after a predetermined amount of time. As a rule, the interventions provided are based on the availability of standardized resources within the school from ones that have proven effective for students with similar difficulties (Berkeley, 2009).

RTI is a fairly new educational structure and requires a lot of commitment and knowledge by all school staff. The need for highly-specialized educators, along with intervention tools and appropriate assessments, is imperative. Werts et al. (2009) stated that

in order to successfully employ RTI, judgment of student responsiveness, data collection methods, selection of research-based interventions, appropriateness of instruction, assessment options, and staff training need to be addressed. Assessment is the key to determining student growth, and the RTI method applies monitoring through frequent assessment practices. Werts et al. (2009) noted that schools which demonstrate best practice RTI screen every student at regular intervals to determine who in the population is sufficiently responding to instruction. In order to best track student achievement, assessment in this regard would be summative and formative.

Sanger, Friedli, Brunken, Snow, and Ritzman (2012) conducted a nine-month, mixed-methods study with the aim to gather empirical evidence by exploring the reactions of educators in a sample of secondary schools (Grades 6 through 12), before and after implementing RTI during a school year. A convenience sampling of 18 educators, including six classroom teachers, seven speech-language pathologists, four psychologists, and one paraprofessional, from 10 schools, were consulted for the study. The majority (n=15) of the participants were employed for more than six years, and all but three had earned a minimum of a master's degree. All were familiar with the RTI concept; however, none of the participants had received prior training in RTI implementation.

For the purposes of this study, RTI focused on the literacy components of language, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and written language activities. The students receiving the interventions were verified as language impaired, needing special education services, or struggling to learn, and formally verified as having learning disabilities and reading 2-3 years below grade level.

The study consisted of qualitative data collection methodologies involving interviews, non-scheduled observations, and a pre and post survey made up of six demographic items, seven items related to training and experience, 45 Likert-type items, and one open-ended question. Validity was determined through member checking opportunities during the study and the utilization of participants from multiple schools, in addition to a peer review of all procedures and findings of the study by an independent, mixed-methods researcher (Sanger et al., 2012). At the conclusion of the study, four themes emerged from the data collection including: challenges and educator concerns support for the model, implementation considerations, and an expressed need for experts in special education and communication disorders.

Sanger (2012) reported that although the study did not provide an answer to all of the concerns surrounding RTI, the information gained is an important contribution toward achieving a better understanding of RTI in classroom environments. In terms of the views of the learners, the authors stated that students who were part of the RTI process reported feeling more confident about reading comprehension, understanding text vocabulary, and composing complete sentences with expanded ideas. In addition, all of the participants acknowledged the importance of progress monitoring; therefore, assessment is important in guiding and defining the development of all students.

Typically, students who are identified through screening as needing intervention services are those with the most diverse abilities. McAlenney and McCabe (2012) agreed with Sanger et al. (2012) and asserted that early identification, along with the use of progress monitoring instruments that are valid, reliable, and easy to administer; and support the

improvement of instruction based on findings, are foundational to educational development. They stated that accuracy in assessment is critical. Keeping with this theme, Dykeman (2006) noted that traditionally norm-referenced assessments have been used to document the achievement of students. However, alternative assessment strategies such as authentic assessment, play-based assessment, functional assessment, applied behavioural analysis, formative evaluations, and curriculum-based measurement are more frequently being discussed in relation to RTI. He adds that RTI does not have to rely on any one assessment method, and that a number of strategies can be incorporated, depending on student need. Throughout the intervention process of test-treat-test, student learning needs are identified, scientifically based curriculum is provided based on needs, and the student's response to the intervention is assessed using tools that are specific to the case. Dykeman (2006) proposed that considerations need to be made for individual student skill-sets, and assessments need to be made available that shift from focusing on what is wrong with the student, to what works for the student, and what can the student demonstrate proficiently.

Cohen, Schmidt-Lackner, Romanczyk, and Sudhalter (2003) stated that although there are an abundance of excellent diagnostic tools, most often those tools are not designed to assess response to treatment or intervention, nor are they suitable for general classroom teachers. They assert that there is a need for teacher-friendly assessment tools that assess adaptive and maladaptive behaviours and functioning. Although adequate programing can be implemented, assessment resources that educators can rely on to give them an accurate picture of student ability need to be available, whether the school implements the traditional RTI model or not. The information presented in the above research indicates that assessment tools which aim to evaluate the learning of students with exceptionalities need to

be accessible to all educators. The aforementioned studies suggest that assessment resources need to support intervention decision making, as well as student programming.

Assessment in the British Columbia context. Typical assessment in British Columbia revolves around skill markers called Prescribed Learning Outcomes (PLOs). The British Columbia Ministry of Education (2011) reported that PLOs are curricular standards that represent what students are expected to know and do at the end of an indicated grade or course. Since a number of the student population that are designated as Special Education students do not have programs that totally align with typical curriculum, skill markers for these students need to be individually developed. Thus, an IEP is created to be student specific, and assessments are meant to be informative in nature, and based around goal progress.

The British Columbia Ministry of Education (2006) noted that standards for students with exceptionalities should be high, but appropriate for the students need. Furthermore, students with exceptionalities are expected to achieve all, most, or even some provincial curricular outcomes, even in the presence of support, unless learning deficits are so great that curricular content is not remotely aligned with grade level. In relation to evaluation, this means that assessment procedures must accommodate the range of adaptations or modifications implemented.

According to Volante (2006) a concern over the quality of education has prompted Canadian provinces to develop large-scale assessment programs to measure student achievement. Volante researched assessment programs across Canada and documented the impact of large-scale testing on teachers and students, including students with

exceptionalities. Finally he reported on alternative visions for large-scale assessment, since the educators he consulted noted that large-scale assessments are not appropriate for all students. Volante's research is important for Special Education in that it supports the notion of individualized assessment as opposed to large-scale, whole-group testing.

Volante (2006) noted that students in British Columbia participate in a number of assessment programs, such as Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) for students in Grades 4 and 7, and Provincial Exams for students in Grades 10, 11 and 12, which are large-scale assessments that consider reading comprehension, writing, and numeracy as mirrored by curriculum. These criterion-referenced tests are unlike the norm-referenced assessments in the United States; however, Provincial Exams tend to have high-stakes consequences for students in terms of grades. Volante (2006) noted that large-scale assessment programs need to explore innovative ways to assess skills that do not readily lend themselves to traditional paper-and-pencil tests. He also remarked that test preparation strategies do little to promote authentic learning, which is the foundation of most Special Education programs, and large-scale assessments are unable to measure performance-based skills that are essential to the growth and development of students with exceptionalities. He asserted that multiple measures, such as portfolios, projects, checklists, rubrics and demonstrations, as part of the assessment process, provide a greater variety of student capacity and a better basis for judgment of ability. He noted that assessment for the purpose of developing programs and supporting teaching and learning is more important than using raw scores as a grading influence.

Limitations in this (Volante, 2006) study include the data collection methods he used. Volante does not indicate how many articles he consulted or how many educators he

conferred with. While the study looked at large-scale assessments and the consequences for students, including excerpts of BC teacher comments would have strengthened the study. The study does not clearly indicate specifically where all of the data came from. Although the study considers assessments used in BC public schools, actual data from the perspective of an educator would have added value to the research. However, there does not seem to be many studies that look at assessment methods in British Columbia, so the data taken from this study does support the need for an alternative assessment resource for students with exceptionalities.

Currently, there is an abundance of information regarding Special Education and many articles on assessment on the internet and in print. However the majority of the alternative assessment books and resources are written to reflect American laws and education policies. While these books provide some information, evidence of tracking and evaluation of goals is required for students with IEPs in British Columbia. There is a definite lack of resources for British Columbian educators relating to the evaluation process of exceptional students, specifically handbooks that feature information on different types of assessment along with templates for data gathering that align with BC standards.

While there is an abundance of information on educational assessment, the majority of research conducted on alternative forms of assessment for students with exceptionalities is based on American laws and policies. Even though a large portion of the literature relates to large-scale standardized assessments, a few of the educational ideas and alternative assessment premises are relevant to BC students and teaching practices.

Curricular Accommodations and Assessment

A portion of the literature on assessment of exceptional students suggests that embedding accommodations while evaluating the general curriculum for all students is an acceptable way to create access to typical curriculum and grade-level content. Browder et al. (2004) remarked that in some cases modifying content or creating opportunities for students with exceptionalities to experience foundational life skills is also educationally sound. The general curriculum and learning outcomes are essentially guides that should direct learning, including the learning experienced by students with exceptionalities.

Browder et al. (2004) noted that Special Education has moved from simple life skills exposure, to social inclusion and authentic learning, with an emphasis on self-determination and person-centered planning. Skill development, in conjunction with personal goal-setting, implies that students with severe exceptionalities may attend a Biology class to receive exposure to the general curriculum, but ultimately have expectations for learning self-regulation skills in social contexts. Students with exceptionalities can learn functional skills in general education classrooms, but still require some form of alternate assessment to determine social skill growth as opposed to measuring curricular knowledge. A shift has begun that is moving from normative assessments, to individual assessment of growth.

Scott, Webber, Lupart, Aitken, and Scott (2013) conducted a three-phase, two-year, mixed-methods study which focused on promoting fairness and equity in student assessment practices in Alberta, Canada. Through the use of questionnaires and interviews, the researchers consulted 3,312 individuals including: students, educators, parents, department of education personnel, teachers' union staff, school council members, school trustees,

professional developers and university faculty. Participants represented a wide range of school types, such as, public (n=7), private (n=2), Hutterite facilities (n=4), alternative and outreach (n=3), charter establishments (n=3), and home schooling, and encompassed elementary (n=7), middle, junior (n=3), and senior high schools (n=6), and K-9 facilities (n=3), and K-12 (n=1) schools. The range of locations included inner city (n=5), suburban (n=6), and rural (n=7).

Scott et al. (2013) noted that the first phase of the study included an extensive literature review and a two lecture series lead by scholars with expertise in the field of student assessment. The second phase consisted of a series of focus groups. In the third phase, interviews and focus groups (N=692) were conducted with principals (n=12), assistant principals (n=10), elementary teachers (n=62), secondary teachers (n=100), elementary students (n=166), secondary students (n=296), and parents (n=46). Simultaneously, questionnaires (N=2,542) were used to gather data from secondary students (n=916), elementary students (632), educators (n=195), and parents (n=799). The focus group schedules and questionnaires were based on the qualitative data collected from phase two. The instruments were purposefully designed to align with the items so that comparisons could be made between the two groups. The final phase consisted of a data analysis, thematically coding data, and the reporting of study findings.

At the culmination of the study, five key principles emerged: Educators must strive to address the impact of assessment practices on students; assessments must be differentiated to accommodate the ability, social, cultural, and linguistic background of students; all members of the school community must challenge the complacency associated with accepting indefensible assessment practices; the frequency, intensity, and intrusiveness

of assessments must not be overwhelming for students; and finally, assessments must not be used to counter inappropriate student behavior or reward desired behavior. Data gathered from all areas of the study indicate that there are issues associated with student assessment that may challenge fair and equitable practices, particularly for students who are identified as having exceptional learning needs. Scott et al. (2012) stated that each student needs to be considered as an individual with unique experiences, knowledge bases, strengths and needs. Moreover, students must have ample opportunity to demonstrate the learning outcomes.

A few educators felt that the accuracy of special needs assessment was questionable and "if assessment is not specialized for them [students with exceptionalities] it just pushes them lower and lower" (Scott et al., 2013). Consequently, the quantitative findings of the study state that 94.8% of teachers agree or strongly agree that students with special learning needs should have access to accommodations or adaptations for assessments. In addition, only 28.3% of respondents agree that teachers satisfactorily change assessments for students with alternative learning needs. The accommodations to which the respondents referred include having support staff read assignments and tests aloud to students, allowing students to provide verbal answers instead of written, and offering additional time to complete learning tasks.

Scott et al. (2013) summarized that educators were more positive than parents and even students in their perception that students with exceptionalities should have adequate access to adaptations and accommodations for assessments, and that teachers should, and do modify assessments. They noted that although accommodations and adaptations are necessary for students with learning difficulties, opportunities for providing adaptations are not always available, or require educators to exude more effort, so they are not always

offered. Scott et al. (2013) concluded that all students, including those with exceptionalities are expected to meet some sort of curricular standards therefore, differentiation is often necessary to enhance learning and student evaluation. Since the development of alternative assessments is a necessity, Scott et al. (2013) argued that teachers, who have the responsibility for inclusive teaching and assessment for students with exceptionalities, must understand and utilize appropriate accommodations for students who require differentiation.

Scott et al. (2013) recommended that in order to create the best learning environment and valid assessment tools, teachers need to have knowledge about their learners and a good idea about what their students need to be successful. Educators need to be adept at differentiation and supporting their students to demonstrate the prescribed learning outcomes in everyday learning, as well as in assessment. In doing this, teachers need to have knowledge about the variety of evaluation adaptations and accommodations available to students that would ensure fair and equitable representation. Due to the fact that the Scott et al. (2013) assessment study involved an assortment of educators and a variety of facilities over a two-year period, the information can be generalized to all educational facilities, and the findings support the need for alternative assessment resources for all students who require differentiation.

Like Scott et al. (2013), Ford, Davern, and Schnorr (2001) stated that students with exceptionalities need to experience learning as a valued member of a general classroom while accomplishing growth in relation to meaningful outcomes. They noted that a movement towards inclusion in assessments for students with exceptionalities has caused some concern with the appropriateness of curriculum. Consequently, they proposed

emphasizing foundational skills such as daily living skills, problem solving, literacy development, and interacting with community.

Ford et al. (2001) noted that differentiating curriculum and the resulting measurable benchmarks are referred to as alternative performance indicators. They also proposed that educators can create alternative performance indicators by simplifying regular outcomes to meet the level of student ability or redefine the curriculum so that it represents some type of functional skill. Additionally, the tasks that are suited to the needs of exceptional students need to be meaningful and authentic.

Ford et al. (2001) announced that five considerations need to be made when developing learning opportunities and alternative assessments for students with exceptionalities. First of all, foundational skills and evaluation of student competency should be a learning priority. Second, individualization and student-specific goals are imperative. Third, the learning environment must reflect the needs of the student with exceptionalities and support optimal learning. While inclusion is the overarching goal, small group or pull-out sessions might be necessary to facilitate student learning. Fourth, students with exceptionalities should experience mastery demonstrated through relevant assessments in relation to the tasks they are working on. Finally, educational opportunities that arise throughout the day should be utilized since the immediate experience is as important as planned activities. In relation to the considerations, Ford et al. (2001) noted that learning and assessment opportunities for students with exceptionalities must be purposeful, and meet the individualized needs of each student.

With similar ideologies, Thurlow, Elliott, and Ysseldyke (1998) stated that the key to monitoring student progress is to align accommodations used during instruction with those needed for classroom, district, and governmental assessments. A number of accommodations can be applied to assessments for students with both high-incidence and low-incidence exceptionalities. Accommodations include alterations that can be made to the setting, timing, scheduling, presentation, response and level of participation in an assessment. Accommodations can be used for assessment, and also to interact with the curriculum. Consideration should be on what is needed by each individual student to actively participate in the instructional process and show what he or she knows.

Accommodations that are guided by an IEP indicate how a student is graded or growth is measured, but often makes regular assessment tools inappropriate to use when looking at what a student with exceptionalities has accomplished. Kettler and Elliot (2009) stated that modified achievement standards need to be challenging for exceptional students, but ultimately less difficult than grade-level expectations. Since the nature of assessment is to look at what a student has accomplished, evaluating a student at their own level with an attainment standard which varies in complexity from a typical grade-level achievement evaluation, is important for developing an accurate picture of their skills and abilities.

Furthermore, Kettler and Elliot (2009) noted that getting an accurate and meaningful measure of students with exceptionalities progress and achievement requires a different definition of proficiency than that used for typical students. The process of differentiation is most beneficial for students with severe deficits and learning challenges. Generally, students with exceptionalities require accommodations to their school work, as well as the methods used to assess their knowledge in a particular subject or content area.

Ensuring students with exceptionalities receive educational programming relevant to their needs, accommodations may be necessary either in the form of modifications or adaptations. The British Columbia Ministry of Education (2009) reported that modifications are an instructional or assessment-based accommodation that support a student's educational needs and learning goals which are different from those of the course or subject, whereas an adaptation is a teaching or assessment strategy purposefully designed to accommodate a students' needs so he or she can achieve the learning outcomes of the subject through demonstrating a mastery of concepts. A noteworthy point is that a student working on the learning outcomes of any grade or course level may be supported by adaptations.

Accommodations are amendments made to an activity, assignment, environment, test, or test situation that make it more manageable and appropriate for a student or group of students. Hollenbeck, Rozek-Tedesco, and Finzel (2000) stated that assessment accommodations which can be made to standardized assessments are discernible by four distinct attributes. First of all, any alterations made for a student must not alter the main construct being measured. Secondly, the alterations must be individualized, rather than applied to a group. Third, the alterations must cause differential effects, such that the students who need them benefit in ways that other students would not. Lastly, the adjustments must result in scores that can be interpreted similarly to the interpretations of the regular assessment.

Assessment attributes made to norm-referenced tests can be appropriate when a student is working on an adapted program but still measuring the same learning outcomes of his or her peers. However, for students with exceptionalities that require modifications to their programming, which alters their ability to meet the same learning outcomes as their

peers, assessment of growth and development is still necessary to measure, but a standard assessment is not appropriate.

Implementing adaptations to student assessments includes providing testing that is available for all students, but still testing against a curriculum. Offering a scribe for a student who has difficulty writing, oral responses for students who struggle with writing, or providing more time for an assessment to be completed are examples of some of the appropriate adaptations that increase the availability of a test for students with exceptionalities working on the same-grade curriculum as their peers.

Ketterling-Geller, Alonzo, Braun-Monegan, and Tindal (2007) noted a consideration for implementing accommodations to assessments. They asserted that accurate and appropriately administered testing accommodations can help to combat any characteristics that might negatively affect a person from demonstrating his or her true abilities in the domain area, whereas misuse of accommodations may counteract the benefits and in fact introduce measurement error. Using a variety of adaptations for some students may be necessary, but as cautioned, accommodations must be noted during tracking and act to assist a student with completing an assessment, while still measuring their actual, not enhanced progress.

Alternative Methods of Assessment

Assessment is meant to determine an individual student, or group of student's level of proficiency. An IEP lays out the goals a student is working to attain within a given time frame and includes methods for determining achievement. Some students have an adapted program but work on the same learning outcomes as their peers whereas other students have

a greater need for differentiation and require modifications to their programs and measurement tools.

Stiggins (1991) noted that educational assessment is undergoing a change. He stated that alternative assessment methods, such as performance assessment methodologies like portfolios, exhibitions, demonstrations, direct writing assignments, work samples, and process evaluations are emerging and becoming more widely used than any other assessment method in the classroom; furthermore, the educational outcomes society values for students cannot always be translated to paper and pencil test items.

Towles-Reeves, Kearns, Kleinert, and Kleinert (2009) stated that alternative assessments are necessary for students who cannot participate in general education programs or take part in district-wide assessments, even with the presence of adaptations or modifications. The students who require alternative forms of assessment are a diverse group in that they have a wide variety of learning characteristics, their response repertoires are equally vast and, for some, medical conditions may hamper their demonstration of skills.

There is a trend towards evaluating the growth of students with exceptionalities in the form of performance-based assessments. Towles-Reeves, et al. (2009) stated that performance-based formats such as portfolio and checklists allow more flexibility in administration, academic content, and scoring procedures than traditional pencil and paper tests for students who require differentiation. Oftentimes, tally sheets, checklists, portfolios and rubrics along with observation data is used to assess those students with extensive exceptionalities who have unique programming. These types of assessment are generally quick to administer, but supply teachers with a lot of information. The data gained from

these types of assessments is used to guide instructional methods and is also foundational to future goal setting.

Towles-Reeves, et al. (2009) noted that alternative assessment formats are often appropriate for students who have an IEP. These students with exceptionalities may present with cognitive disabilities, utilize communication supports and assistive technology, require differentiated instruction under multiple conditions to generalize learning, and likely receive functional curricula. Using empirical data to determine a baseline and uncover what a student has achieved guides further planning. For students with exceptionalities that have modified programs assessing their progress means that determinations are being made as to what the student can or cannot do in relation to what they are working on. They are not compared to peers, or the curricular outcomes of a specific grade-level.

Rowe, Herrington, and Brown (2014) conducted a mixed-methods study in order to determine the significant elements of authentic learning. Their purpose was to use the elements they discovered to design, develop, and apply authentic learning assessments to participants in a four phase process. Specifically, they were seeking to align alternative learning and teaching outcomes in order to support the notion that competence is displayed through situational and personal means as opposed to simple skill mastery. In relation to this, two research questions guided their study: what are the specific characteristics of authentic assessment that simplify the design and assessment of authentic tasks? And, how do students respond to tasks designed to incorporate the characteristics of authentic assessment?

The first phase of the study involved the identification of the important elements of authentic assessment through literary review, which were taken and presented to practitioners for feedback. In the second phase, the researchers codified the elements into a framework and then redesigned the assessments used in an adult course. Phase three involved student evaluation of the redesigned assessment activities, which led to further review and revision of the elements in phase four.

Phase one of the study included a comprehensive literature review related to authenticity in assessment. From the review, Rowe et al. (2014) determined that the literature provided enough data to conduct a qualitative analysis of a wide range of factors which affect the authenticity of a learning experience. The elements were analyzes and grouped according to the aspects of authentic assessment, including the notion that authentic assessment should: be challenging, establish connections between real-world experiences and school-based ideas, focus on skills and knowledge that students are able to demonstrate while completing specific tasks, determine the extent to which the skill or knowledge being assessed has meaning beyond a single context, and build in opportunities for feedback.

With the information above, Rowe et al. (2014) consulted 13 education practitioners to seek advice on how to best implement their findings in an assessment framework. From there they applied the elements to assessment tools which they then used in an adult course. Following the use of the assessment tools, they had the students evaluate the assessment activities, concluding that authentic assessments, paired with authentic learning environments and explicit tasks, were valuable and supported the learning process.

The information above indicates that assessments which are task-specific and paired with an authentic experience support student learning. The findings by Rowe et al. (2014) are supported by other studies which argue that assessment is a central component of the learning process, and that there seems to be a separation between traditional pencil and paper approaches to assessment and learning and new, authentic assessment developments. Their mixed-methods study supports the notion of authentic and alternative forms of assessment. They propose that students with exceptionalities should be able to demonstrate their growth and development in alternative ways, which supports the need for alternative assessment resources.

Bourke, Mentis, and Todd (2010) noted that assessments for students with exceptionalities need to capture in-the-moment learning. They conducted a national survey in New Zealand in order to identify current assessment methods educators use to determine the learning of students with exceptionalities. They sought to uncover the types of assessments used, reasons for the approaches used, the role of the person carrying out the assessments, and levels of confidence in assessing students in relation to learning. The results showed that classroom teachers were largely responsible for assessments, and three main assessment methods were used including: collection of work samples, observations, and anecdotal records. Furthermore, Bourke et al. (2010) concluded that learning is maximized when the learner participates in assessment activities in natural and authentic contexts. There is a need for assessments that are inclusive and applicable for all children, such as portfolios, observations, recollections, checklists, and anecdotal notes.

Tally sheets, checklists, and observation recordings are alternative methods educators can use for assessing a variety of educational objectives. Tally sheets and

checklists are generally simple to use and require a checkmark under the relevant heading and end up showing the number of times a student performs a task or displays behaviour in a given time frame. These quick assessment tools are versatile, can be used to track a variety of skills or behaviour, and capture in-the-moment learning (Bourke, Mentis, & Todd, 2010).

Observational notes are another alternative assessment tool and are generally more intensive and require the observer to write what they see or hear. Observations require a person to be completely focused on the student or situation in order for the notes to be useful and valid. Observations are usually used to make a judgment on how a student with exceptionalities is reacting to a condition, task or setting. Sometimes observations are valuable in that they provide data on student behaviour for a given time frame. This data may be situational and recording notes can be compared to uncover reoccurring themes.

Portfolios and rubrics are other alternative forms of assessment. A portfolio can be a collection of work samples gathered over the school year to showcase student knowledge and skill level and growth. In order to assess portfolio work, rubrics are generally used. A rubric can be created for any topic and can be scored using virtually any point scale however, a four point scale is common and easy to use. In relation to students with exceptionalities, the four points of the scale can be ordered from one to four and be classified as, not yet meeting expectations, approaching expectations, meeting expectations, and exceeding expectations, with variations in wording. The four point scale can also easily be converted to represent percentile rankings.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of the literature review was to present information regarding current literature in the area of assessing students with exceptionalities. The review showed that there are different degrees of assessment in education, and while there is potentially a lot of information on the internet and in print regarding assessment, much of the information online is related to American education policies and because these policies do not reflect Canadian laws not all of the assessment methods relate to BC educators. The review confirmed that current methods of assessment tend to reflect the needs of the student population. Elliot et al. (2008) concluded that students who only require minor adaptations to their academic learning, such as the use of simplified language can also have minor adaptations made to the assessments they take part in. The learning is paired with the assessment so that the same strategies are used in each case, better supporting students with exceptionalities in their learning.

The information gathered from the literature review showed that assessment in BC schools involves teachers having to determine the level of students' knowledge compared to skill indicators. However, students with exceptionalities do not always participate in the general curriculum to the same extent as their typical peers, therefore the learning outcomes they are working on may be different than their peers. In this case, adaptations or modifications are needed to ensure a student is working towards personally applicable skills.

Furthermore, accommodations that support student learning can be applied to academics, functional skills, and also assessments. Students with exceptionalities have programs that aim to have them demonstrate growth and development in an educational

setting, along-side their peers. Accommodations can come in a variety of formats and do not give a student an advantage over other students, but act as a support to allow the student to show what they know. The purpose of accommodations is to provide educational programming relevant to students with exceptionalities needs.

Finally, alternative methods of assessment are related to accommodations a student with special learning needs uses in everyday learning, but are more specific to the actual testing of knowledge. An alternative assessment refers to the replacement of a test a typical student may take with a different format of assessment for a student with special needs. An alternative method of assessment might include collecting work samples in a portfolio, allowing the student to create a project, or having a student demonstrate learning other than recording answers on a piece of paper. Towles-Reeves, et al. (2009) stated that alternative methods of assessments are often appropriate for determining the growth of students with exceptionalities. Therefore, assessments such as checklists, tally sheets, and rubrics, which can be utilized to depict growth or development, would be appropriate for students with exceptionalities.

The aforementioned studies, which make up the literature review, strongly suggest that there is a need for alternative methods of assessment, relevant to a variety of students. The information I collected in relation to assessing students with exceptionalities supports the need for a comprehensive handbook containing a variety of assessment tools, useful to all educators, and relevant to a number of students. The research methods, results and interpretation of the findings, and assessment handbook are provided in the following chapters of this project.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

In Chapter 1, I presented information on the relevance and usefulness of a comprehensive handbook for educators to support the academic, behavioural, and functional assessment of students with exceptionalities. In support of this idea, I included a literature review in Chapter 2 that highlighted data belying the importance of affective educational assessment, especially the evaluation of growth and development of students with unique learning needs. I presented alternative methods of assessment as well as applicable assessment accommodations. In this chapter, I will discuss the research methods I used for collecting data for my study. I will include information on the project design and methodologies, as well as methods I used for data analysis to interpret the information to develop codes and broad themes related to alternative assessment. Following that, I will present the components of the assessment handbook and conclude the chapter with a summary. Samples from the first and second phases of coding have been included in Appendix A and B, respectively.

Project Design and Methodologies

I considered many options when planning and designing the methodologies for my study. I chose a method that would allow me to gather authentic information from a variety of colleagues, as well as data from current literature pertaining to the assessment of students with alternative educational needs. I wanted to gather specific quotes from naturally occurring conversations with educators so that the information I collected accurately reflected the needs of educators as divulged in convenient settings, without the influence of a script or questionnaire. Stringer (2007) noted that data from research sources should be

recorded verbatim and researchers should resist the urge to paraphrase content to protect validity. Therefore, collecting precise data from authentic conversations would be foundational to my research project and support my goal to actively gather ideas from educational articles and educators that reflect the current environment and trends related to daily assessment of students with unique learning needs. The following section outlines the project as well as the methods I used to create and conduct my study.

Action research approach. I conducted an action research study to investigate the assessment needs of British Columbian educators in relation to evaluating the learning and progress of students with exceptionalities in Kindergarten to Grade 12. The study is considered action research as the conversations I had with colleagues, in addition to the information I took from educational literature, helped me to address a specific issue. Following that, I used the information I gathered to take action and create a solution through the creation of an alternative assessment handbook. Using an action research approach was suited to my inquiry because it allowed me to gather qualitative data through colleague conversation and an array of educational literature. Furthermore, I was able to implement action research to determine specific educational needs, reflect on my own teaching practice, and establish the supports necessary for educators to assess students with exceptionalities (Creswell, 2012). Specifically, I used a practical action research design with a goal to foster immediate change in educational assessment within my school district. To begin, I amassed qualitative data from current educational articles and books that related to educational assessment, and then I repeated the process of qualitative data collection from collaboration with colleagues. From there, I merged and interpreted the information I collected from both sources to determine educators' most relevant assessment concerns and needs.

The decision to conduct a qualitative action research study was twofold: (1) using conversation as a data-collection method allowed me to experience authentic, mutually beneficial interactions with colleagues that provided opportunities for me to maintain the flow of conversation by asking questions if necessary; (2) using the data from educational literature and colleague conversations allowed me to analyze information in relation to the assessment needs of local educators, prompting me to take action to address the needs of colleagues immediately following the study.

Triangulation. I utilized two informational sources while conducting the research for this project. Using a combination of one or more sources to collect data and increase the credibility and validity of the results in research is known as triangulation (Rothbauer, 2008). Triangulation of sources is beneficial in research. Triangulation helps to overcome the weaknesses of one research source by using a variety of mediums to supplement and check one another, therefore providing a more balanced view. My purpose for using triangulation via literary articles and human subjects as data-collection sources for this project was to determine if the themes I interpreted from the literature were similar to, or supportive of, the themes I interpreted from colleague conversations. Furthermore, I wanted to lend strength to my findings by utilizing diverse sources, rather than relying on only one information medium.

Data Collection Sources and Methods

Data for this project were collected through the analysis of educational literature, which related to the assessment of students with exceptionalities, and also through colleague conversations based on alternative assessment needs. My intention while working on this

project, was to use a range of genuine educational sources that would provide a relevant and accurate account of educators' perspectives in relation to alternative assessment.

Educational literature. I chose educational journals and books from different sources in order to diversify the content I was reading in relation to assessment. I wanted to utilize a resource that worked with my busy schedule and allowed me to gather qualitative data presented through education-related articles and texts. I consulted a number of journal articles and print sources pertaining to educational assessment. While I read through the information I recorded paragraphs and phrases that pertained to the educational assessment of students with exceptionalities, and alternative assessment options. I endeavored to consult articles and books containing current information, as well as older information to determine if changes in assessment have occurred, so I took information from ten sources written within the last 17 years.

The literary resources I consulted include: *Classroom assessment within the alternative assessment paradigm: Revising the territory* (Buhagiar, 2007), *Academic improvement through regular assessment* (Wolf, 2007), *The teacher's guide to alternative assessment: Taking the first steps* (Corcoran, Dershimer, & Tichenor, 2010), *Visibly learning teachers' assessment practices for students with high and very high needs* (Bourke, Mentis, & Todd 2010), *Curriculum and assessment for students with moderate and severe disabilities* (Browder, 2001), *Differentiated assessment strategies* (Chapman & King, 2005), *Assessment of exceptional students: Educational and psychological procedures* (Taylor, 1997), *Educational testing for students with disabilities* (Thurlow, Elliot, Ysseldyke, 2003), *Alternative strategies in assessing special education needs* (Dykeman, 2006), and *Investigating access to educational assessment for students with disabilities* (Woods,

Parkson & Lewis, 2010). The data collected from text sources were valuable; however my focus was to gather data from a variety of sources in order to create an assessment handbook which would meet the needs of many educators in British Columbia. Once I gathered notes from the literature, I centered my focus on having meaningful conversations with colleagues.

Colleague conversations. Following the literature research, I took part in conversations over a six-week period, with 41 colleagues, pertaining to the unique learning needs and assessment of students with exceptionalities. I suspected that spontaneous conversations with educators would yield more genuine information over time, than other data-collection methods. My purpose was to use a convenience sample of educators, along with a method of accumulating data that was inductive and flexible, to determine ways that educators might feel more supported in their assessment endeavors, as indicated through their comments. Choosing to use conversation as a method to gather educator's perceptions in relation to alternative assessment was appropriate because I wanted to get to know my colleagues better, and discuss assessment collaboratively.

I also wanted to collect the information in a timely manner, which I did not feel would happen if I had asked them to fill out a time-consuming questionnaire, or take part in a sit-down interview. I wanted the educators I consulted to be at ease while we spoke about assessment, and not have to find time to fill out a survey, which they would have to remember to return to me. Due to my role as Special Education teacher, which includes weekly meetings with school staff and monthly meetings with other district resource staff, I had access to a variety of educators and support workers from different schools within my school district. There was minimal interference in the method I chose for collecting data since

my role as a listener allowed me to consider the words exchanged, rather than asking pointed questions of each participant. The conversations about assessment were authentic and comfortable.

Conversation participants. I used convenience sampling to investigate the assessment needs of 41 educators from my local school district. Over a six-week period I participated in conversations with six learning support workers, 31 teachers, and 4 administrators from a variety of schools in School District 91, including those with exposure to students from an array of grade levels. The sample population and geographical area incorporated in this study included Kindergarten to Grade 12 public school education staff from School District 91: Nechako Lakes, which incorporates the main communities of Burns Lake, Fraser Lake, Vanderhoof, and Fort St. James.

The purpose of using a convenience sample of staff from my local school district was to access individuals that I had collegiate relationships with; as those would be the educators I would be most likely to provide assessment resources for. Secondly, I wanted the information I collected to come from conversations that were both natural and comfortable. Thirdly, I believed that the use of convenient participants would offer me a variety of responses about an assortment of experiences, thus enriching my study and allowing me to have a comprehensive collection of notes in my reflective journal. The following section outlines the reflective journaling-data collection method I conducted to complete my study.

Participants were not solicited, and I did my best to protect the anonymity of the participants by refraining from indicating which comment was attributed to which educator. However, I did attempt to record the speaker's job position so that I could determine which

job areas the participants represented. My aim was to speak primarily with general classroom teachers, but also gain insight into alternative assessment from support and administration perspectives.

When the topic of assessment came up in conversation, I recorded the statements made by my colleagues in a reflective journal. I made every effort to record exactly what was said, and sometimes I asked for clarification or for further explanation. I used the same journal to collect notes from all sources. The following section outlines the reflective journaling and data collection method I conducted to complete my study.

Reflective journaling. I used a reflective journal to record notes as I read a variety of educational assessment sources, including educational articles and reference books. I also recorded phrases and comments in the journal that were made by colleagues which referred to the assessment of students with exceptionalities. Regardless of to whom I spoke, if a collegiate conversation touched on the topic of assessment, I made an effort to record specific phrases, just as I recorded key segments authors mentioned. The process was arduous at times, but in the end, I appreciated the commitment I made to keeping detailed notes so that I could later code the data and use the information to uncover commonalities and build the foundation for the assessment handbook I was planning to create.

I chose to use a reflective journal as a note-taking medium because the act of physically writing something down is personally meaningful for me. Journaling seems to help me remember information more easily, and I knew that the act of reflection would allow me to better internalize the ideas I collected. O'Connell and Dyment (2011) stated that a reflective journal is a personal document where a writer can jot down research notes,

quotes, personal comments, or include extracts from texts, conversations, or lectures for the purposes of gaining insights into self-awareness and learning. I used the reflective journal as a medium for collecting ideas in order to increase my awareness and uncover common ideologies.

I created two-column layouts on each page of my reflective journal. I had the expectation that the separated sections could help keep my research notes and personal memos organized, legible, and sequential, which would make transferring of data and subsequent phases of coding in an alternate document easier. In the first column, I copied sections of text from reading education articles and books, if I found the data pertinent to my research. Once I began to take notes from conversations, I recorded the speaker's job title, along with quotes regarding non-standardized assessments that I heard while conversing with a variety of educators, in the first column as well.

I did not use an audio recording device to record the conversations I had regarding assessment, so I relied on in-the-moment interactions or memory to jot down what my colleagues were saying in my journal. Most often I carried my journal with me so I was able to use it as I conversed with colleagues. At one point during my data collection phase, a group of educators were talking about the task of reporting on their students' progress, so I was able to gather information as they spoke and ask for clarification if I needed. In some instances I wrote down long phrases, and at other times I recorded point form, key words. I quickly filled 35 journal pages, due in part to the fact that the focus of our school-wide collaboration was student assessment and alternative assessment needs were openly discussed at meetings and in the staffroom. Also, during my data collection phase, I attended a professional development workshop on differentiation and connected with

educators from other School District 91 schools who had thoughts and questions about alternative assessment and evaluating the development and growth of students with exceptionalities.

After reading and reflecting on segments of information I recorded in the first column, I used the second column of the reflective journal as a space to write down some first-impression notes. I did not actively code data in the second column, but developed potential assessment ideas, and also used the space to sketch some assessment templates.

Throughout the study I assured the confidentiality and participant anonymity to the best of my ability. I did not record the names of the colleagues to whom I spoke, and I kept my reflective journal with me, or in the locked drawer of my office desk. Furthermore, I did not discuss the information I collected with anyone during the research portion of my study. The data collected were gathered from current educational resources and from free-flowing conversations therefore, I believe that the notes I took from a sample of educators and educational literature, reflect the current beliefs and requirements of BC educators as a whole.

At the culmination of the collection phase I gathered 15 typed pages of information pertaining to the assessment needs of students with exceptionalities, from a wide range of educators and education-related texts. While the notes were informative, it was not until I began the content analysis and coding process that the specific needs of educators became concrete. The following section explores the steps I took to code the data using the information I'd originally recorded in my reflective journal to uncover themes and sketch my assessment ideas.

Data Analysis

Information gathered from educational literature and colleague conversations were analyzed using a qualitative categorical process. Quotes and text sections were transcribed from journal to word document, and the content of the word document was examined, coded through two phases, and then themed. Codes were assigned based on a summation or general meaning pertaining to the comments or text segments in the initial phase of coding. Codes were assigned a colour, based on commonalities during the second phase of coding. Themes were identified by examining the final codes. The information gathered from this study was used as a foundation to support the creation of an alternative assessment resource for educators.

Analyzing Content and Coding Data

In order to determine what educators are looking for in terms of assessment, and uncover any complications encountered with tracking the development of students with exceptionalities, I conducted a qualitative content analysis. I systematically and objectively decoded the data I heard about, read about, and wrote about by thoroughly analyzing it and working through an informative qualitative research process. Elo and Kyngas (2008) declared that researchers use content analysis to distil words into fewer content-related categories, and when classified into the same categories, words, phrases, and the like share the same meaning. My goals were to analyze the data in context with the purpose of attaining a condensed description of the topic, and from there, formulate a practical guide to action.

I transferred all of the data I collected in the first column of my journal into a two-column word document, starting with the data I collected from educational literature. I used the first column for typing the transcribed data, while the second column was intended as the space to record initial codes. I typed the note-segments word-for-word, as I took them from the journal, separating each comment by one line so I could consider every segment separately when it was time to work through the coding process. Once I had finished typing out the information from educational texts, I used the same word document to transcribe the quotes I collected through colleague conversations. I typed the quotes into the first column, and separated them from previous and following quotes by one line. At the end of this process, I had 22 pages of typed text.

I used a two-column word document to display the pre-coded data so that the text was orderly and became a document separate from the original journal. By transferring the data from the journal into a second document, I created a more versatile piece of text. I was able to move and separate text as needed, print copies of the document to work through a rough draft, and make additions and deletions as necessary.

Initial coding. Once the data were transferred from journal to word document, I read through the text to ensure that spelling was correct, and that I had not missed any details so I could code the data without having to jump back and forth between the handwritten and typed documents. Once I was satisfied with the data transcription, I printed off a copy so that I could record my initial codes on the paper by hand, rather than try and type them in the original text. I wanted to create a rough copy that I could add themes to or notes in the margin if I felt the need. I also wanted to be able to see all of the text at once, and shuffle between pages to find a comment if I needed to. Having a paper copy allowed me to interact

with the data and feel more comfortable than I would have been if I had coded the data within the original typed document.

To begin the initial round of coding, I started with the first text segment, read through it, and determined the underlying meaning. From the meaning, I assigned a code word or phrase to the segment, and recorded it across from the piece of text, in the second column of the page. I continued through the whole document in the same manner, assigning summative code words or phrases to each segment of text. As I worked through the initial phase of coding I was able to jot down a few potential themes in the margins of the page. I discovered that patterns and commonalities emerged in educator's responses and from education-related literature. At the culmination of the initial phase of coding, I coded 86 extracts from conversations and developed 271 codes from 200 text segments, resulting in 357 codes.

Once I completed the initial phase of coding, I went back to the word document and typed the codes into the second column, across from each text segment, as listed in the rough draft. Appendix A is a sample of the recorded data and initial phase of coding.

Second phase of coding. Following the initial phase of coding, I wanted to group the codes, so I conducted a second phase of coding and grouped the codes by colour. This type of data analysis was three-fold: (1) I wanted to highlight common ideas amongst the codes in order to build solid themes, (2) visually separate the codes from each other, (3) limit code redundancy. Creswell (2012) noted that the object of coding is to make sense of the data, divide data into image segments, and scrutinize for overlap and redundancy. Based on Creswell's object of coding, assigning varying colours to codes based on commonalities

would visually separate unique codes, thus showing the number of separate codes and limiting repetition.

Furthermore, using colour to represent common codes related to assessment would allow me to see which ideas were most prevalent. The more times a code is repeated, the more prevalent the notion, in relation to the educators I spoke to and the texts I read. Therefore, codes that are heavily repeated would be of greatest importance to a range of educators.

To begin the second phase of coding, I read though all of the code words in the second column and grouped common codes by colour. Initially, I selected six colours to highlight the codes because I was not sure how many unique codes I had listed. The process of colour coding was fairly straightforward. I read the code and highlighted the word or phrase based on whether it was similar to a previous code or a new notion then, I moved on to the next code, intent on using a different colour if necessary. If the code was similar to previous codes, I highlighted it with that assigned colour, if not; I marked it with a new colour. If I was unsure about assigning a colour to a code, I left it and returned later. Appendix B is a sample of the colour-coding.

Once the colour-coding was completed in the second column, I was able to visually separate the different ideas that emerged and get an idea of which codes were most prevalent. At the culmination of colour-coding the data, I used 14 colours. After completing the colour-coding, I read though the codes in the second column and extracted ideas from the common codes and came up with themes related to the alternative assessment

of students with exceptionalities. The section below relates to the process I undertook to assign themes.

Themes

From the 15 unique code-groups collected, I was able to develop themes related to my research question, based on the assessment of students with exceptionalities. I combined similar codes to create four major themes. Each code was related to some aspect of assessment, so creating themes was not a difficult task. The major themes I generated included: (a) purpose of assessment, (b) qualities of assessment, (c) variance of assessment, and (d) importance of alternative assessment.

As I came up with themes, I also started to develop ideas about specific assessment tools I could create, and was able to return to my reflective journal and sketch some templates. I read each theme, looking for specific ideas that answered my research question: What are educators looking for in terms of alternative assessment for students with exceptionalities?

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented information on the project design and methodologies, in addition to describing the methods of data collection I used to gather information on alternative assessments. Following that, I gave details about the process of analyzing and coding the data, and finally developing overarching themes from the codes.

I presented information on the action research I conducted to investigate the assessment needs of British Columbian educators in relation to the need for alternative

assessment, specifically aimed at students with exceptionalities in Kindergarten to Grade 12. The study was considered action research because the conversations I had with colleagues and the information I gathered from educational literature, helped me to address the issue of alternative assessment.

As part of the research process, I discussed the data collection sources used and methods utilized to collate the data. I recorded segments of information from educational texts regarding assessment, and then collected ideas from colleagues through casual conversations in a reflective journal. The conversations I had with a variety of educators allowed me to gather an abundance of authentic data regarding alterative educational assessments, while the journal articles and educational texts provided me with information on the alternative assessment needs of students with exceptionalities and current assessment trends.

The journaling enabled me to record the comments made by colleagues and authors in relation to the process of assessing students with exceptionalities. I was able to reflect on the information I gathered, and formulate ideas for templates and alternative assessment tools that would be appropriate for evaluating the progress of students with exceptionalities. This information was the focus of my analysis.

Following the use of the reflective journal, I transcribed the data into a word document and analyzed, then coded it. After the initial phase of coding I conducted a second phase of coding, assigning a colour to each code. If a code was the same as a previous example, I gave it the same colour. The purpose of colour-coding was to visually distinguish the information. After colour-coding the data, I had 11 conclusive codes.

At the culmination of coding, I reviewed the codes and created themes based on categorization of the codes, resulting in four major themes. The emersion of the data into themes relative to alternative assessment was an informative process. Through the content analysis and coding processes I uncovered ideas which supported my desire to create an assessment handbook for educators, relevant to students with exceptionalities. Since the coding procedure provided me with specific information I could use to create assessment templates, I was pleased with the results and confident that the handbook I would create would be useful. I was able to begin developing ideas based on alternative assessment tools and templates for educators to use with their students.

In Chapter 4 I will present results specific to the study I conducted, and highlight the subsequent findings. The results will include information on the colleagues and educational literature I consulted, as well as an exploration of the themes that emerged from coding the data. Finally, I will focus on the findings and present insights into the components of my handbook.

Chapter 4: Results

In Chapter 1, I introduced the concept of my project, and reported on the educational importance of an assessment handbook based on the evaluation of academic, behavioural, and functional skills of students with exceptionalities. In Chapter 2, I provided a thorough review of current literature on the assessment of students with exceptionalities. I included information on alternative assessment methods and accommodations. In Chapter 3, I outlined my research methods, project design and methodologies, in addition to presenting information on the data analysis I used to develop codes and themes in relation to alternative assessment. In this chapter, I will report the results of my action research study. First, I will discuss the results I obtained from educational journal article research, and then I will divulge the results of analyzing and tabulating colleague conversations. In subsequent sections, I will present the findings, from the initial phase of data collection, to collating the information into relevant themes in order to determine what specifically educators find useful in an assessment resource. I will close the chapter with a section detailing the components of my alternative assessment handbook, and end with a chapter summary.

Results from Educational Print Materials

I located articles and texts pertaining to the educational development of students with exceptionalities. Texts and articles were selected based on whether or not they provided information on the educational assessment of students with alternative learning needs. Text segments were selected at random from within chapters mentioning evaluation or alternative assessment. My purpose was to locate information to support the creation of non-normative assessments for students with exceptional learning needs. My goal was to find reading

material that offered samples or topic ideas about the formative and summative assessment of students with exceptionalities, who present with a variety of abilities, then code the data, and finally create themes to guide my assessment resource creation.

I gathered and analyzed 200 text segments from 10 sources using an inductive strategy. I examined the text and assigned codes to each portion of text I had recorded. The codes I assigned were based on the content of each segment and represented key concepts using one word or a short phrase.

Once the data were collected, I conducted an initial phase of coding, and then a second phase of coding wherein I used colour to group the initial codes based on commonalities. At the culmination of colour-coding the data collected from educational print material, I used 12 colours to represent unique codes. Table 1 depicts the qualitative coding results, displayed as a percentage.

Code frequency. The educational texts I consulted pertained to the relationship between assessment and teaching, and noted that all students are entitled to targeted assessment which supports instruction, and leads to the improvement of individualized academic achievement or functional skill development. Many of the articles alluded to the need for additional assessment options for students with exceptionalities, and stressed that any assessment conducted should be individualized. The codes I created from text segments, in order of prevalence, include: (a) goal/ student-specific (62 codes), (b) multifaceted/diverse assessment tools (43 codes) (c) authentic and relevant (37) (d) provides proof/ evidence (33 codes) (e) guide instruction (25 codes), (f) intervention (19 codes), and (g) accountability (15 codes), (h) alternative formats/ variety (12 codes), (i)

promoting equality (11 codes), (j) on-going (9 codes), (k) proactive change needed (3 codes) and (l) quick assessments (2 codes). I developed 271 codes from 200 text segments.

The information from educational texts supports the need for alternative assessment resources. Three codes emerged most frequently, supplying over half of the code total. Specifically, the educational texts I examined noted that evaluations which are student-specific are imperative. Sixty-two codes emerged from the 200 text segments supporting this notion. Based on this finding, assessments for students with exceptional learning needs need to be individualized. Furthermore, educational texts noted that assessments for students with exceptional learning needs must be diverse. I assigned 43 codes that maintained that assessment tools should come in a variety of formats and be geared toward various subjects and activities, to support a multitude of student needs. Additionally, assessments which are authentic, allowing for learners to demonstrate their abilities to perform genuine tasks are important, as noted by 37 codes assigned.

The educational texts I accessed were written in the last 17 years. Although they presented different information on alternative assessment, the authors and researchers reported that an array of assessment options is necessary to meet the needs of all learners. Therefore, a resource with multiple assessment tools would be relevant. My research found that the tools within a resource should support individualized and genuine assessment as noted by a number of educational texts. Also, assessments that are specific to authentic tasks are an important part of evaluation for students with exceptionalities.

Table 1

Percentage of Colour-coded Data Obtained from 200 Educational Text Segments Regarding Alternative Assessment

Code	Percentage
Goal/ student specific	22.8%
Multifaceted/diverse	15.8%
Authentic	13.6%
Proof/ evidence of learning	12.1%
Guide instruction	9.2%
Intervention	7%
Accountability	5.5%
Alternative formats/variety	4.4%
Promoting equality	4%
On-going	3.3%
Proactive change needed	1.1%
Quick	0.7%

**percent's are rounded to the nearest tenth*

Results from Colleagues Consulted

After taking notes from educational texts, I endeavored to have meaningful conversations with colleagues in order to collect data based on need, in relation to the assessment of students with exceptionalities. The texts I consulted presented researched and

published information, whereas collegiate interactions provided immediate, naturally occurring conversations and 'in-the-moment' comments, adding strength to my research authenticity.

Demographics. I took notes from conversations I had with 41 educators who hold various educational positions in the Nechako Lakes School District 91. In an intermittent, six-week period, from November 2013 to mid-January 2014, I conversed with educators in a variety of educational settings. All of the educators, to whom I spoke, are employed by School District 91, Nechako Lakes (East End); Vanderhoof, Burns Lake, Fraser Lake, and Fort and St. James. Therefore, the participants in my study provide services for a variety of students with diverse needs. The population of educators I used in my research were both female (n = 37) and male (n = 4) contributors. The participants ranged from Learning Support Workers (LSW), to general education Teachers from Primary, Intermediate, and Secondary school classrooms. In addition, Teachers on Call (TOC), Special Education or Learning Intervention Teachers, Administrators, and District Resource/ Support Staff were consulted at various points throughout the study. The diverse backgrounds combined with a variety of student-support experiences of the educators I spoke to allowed me to gather ideas from individuals with an abundance of knowledge and areas of specialty within the British Columbia education system. By having participants from many areas in the education system, I collected an assortment of information from an array of experienced colleagues.

The goal of my research was to gather data in relation to the assessment needs of educators who interact with a multitude of students, including students with alternative learning needs. I focused my research on the job position the speaker maintained, in addition to the comments uttered in relation to the assessment of students with

exceptionalities. I kept track of the speaker's job title for research purposes. In hindsight, ensuring that my numbers for each position were exact was challenging at times, especially if the conversation involved more than a few people. The totals I present for each participant position are remembered to the best of my ability. Table 2 outlines the job title and number of participants I conversed with during my research.

Learning support workers. The six LSW staff I consulted in my study support a wide variety of students with exceptionalities, from Kindergarten to Grade 7, in one elementary school in Vanderhoof. All of the LSWs noted that they have experience tracking student behaviour and academic or functional skill learning. While none of the Learning Support Workers commented on the availability of assessment resources, perhaps because their role is to use the tools provided for them by a general education classroom teacher, or resource teacher, they did comment on the assessment tools they have used. All of the LSWs mentioned aspects of assessment design they would find beneficial.

The information presented qualitatively from LSWs was analyzed and condensed into five codes: (a) easy, (b) quick, (c) adaptable, (d) goal/ student-specific and (e) premade. One LSW commented, "alternative assessments are needed... they have to be individualized in order to track student learning and IEP (Individualized Education Plan) goals". Another LSW noted, "there is no set time to fill out tracking sheets, I need something that is fairly simple to use and does not interfere with the one-on-one support I offer my students... a photocopiable template that can be easily adapted". An additional LSW stated, "premade templates that can be filled in, or changed, depending on student or goal would help". One LSW noted, "something that won't take me too long to do ... that I can spend a few minutes on" would meet her assessment needs. The data gathered from Learning Support Workers

was valuable. The information provided me with an idea of what LSW appreciate in alternative assessments and what an assessment resource might contain. The data I collected from a variety of teaching colleagues was also relevant.

Teachers. The teachers I consulted during my research varied in years of classroom teaching experience, current classroom grade assignment, and current teaching position. For the purpose of this portion of the study, the term teachers represents TOCs, general education Teachers from primary to secondary grades, and Special Education/ Intervention Teachers. The teaching assignments of my research participants ranged from Kindergarten to Grade 10. I did not have an opportunity to speak with educators who teach senior high school on a regular basis, with the exception of the Teachers On Call, whose work schedule depends on the staffing needs of each school. There was a variance in specialty area and formal training background of the teachers I spoke to. While I was aware of this variance, I did not track individual specialty areas associated with each educator as part of my study, other than their teaching position. I did however gather information from a multitude of educators, with differing grade-level teaching experiences and knowledge bases, hoping that these differences would give me data from a broad range of professionals. Information from the teachers I spoke to is categorized and presented in the following sections.

Teachers on call. The four TOCs I had conversations with commented that they were relatively new to teaching, all having less than 8 years teaching experience. Their comments were analyzed and assigned into three categorical codes: (a) easy, (b) quick, and (c) student-specific. Each of the TOCs noted that they are seldom required to assess student ability; however, in some cases they have had to note specific student performance in relation to behaviour tracking. The four TOCs noted that if they were directed to conduct student

Table 2

Educators Conversed with Regarding Alternative Assessments

Position Held	Total Number Consulted
Learning Support Workers (LSW)	6
Special Education/ Intervention Teachers	7
General Education Teachers	
District Teachers on Call (TOC)	4
Primary	9
Intermediate	7
Secondary	4
Administration & District Resource/ Support Staff	4

assessments, they would want a few specific qualities of the assessment tool they were assigned to use.

The following quotes portray examples of comments made by TOCs in relation to assessment tools. One TOC stated that assessment resources must be, "basic", "uncomplicated", and "not too time consuming". Another TOC noted that she would prefer assessments for students with exceptionalities that, "can be done on the fly" and "are already specific to the students and goals I am tracking". She added, "because I am not their regular teacher, I cannot create something explicit for [the student] and [his or her] needs".

Special education/ intervention teachers. I had conversations about alternative assessment resources with seven Special Education/ Intervention teachers, at various times throughout the six-week study. I had hoped to speak with additional specialized educators about alternative assessment options because they work predominantly with students with exceptionalities. I surmised that Special Education/ Intervention teachers are more likely to conduct a variety of assessments related to goal progress and program development, than their general education colleagues. Special Education/ Intervention Teachers are usually part of every designated student's School Based Team (SBT) and perform a number of Case Manager duties, including formulating and conducting evaluations.

Special Education/ Intervention teachers indicated that an all-encompassing alternative assessment resource would be beneficial. After analyzing comments from Special Education/ Intervention teachers, seven codes were assigned. The codes include: (a) proof/ evidence of learning, (b) visible learning, (c) quick, (d) guide teaching, (e) variety of assessments, (f) goal/student-specific, and (g) adaptable. A sample of Special Education/Intervention teacher comments are presented in the following section.

One Special Education/Intervention teacher noted, "a handbook that has a variety of assessment types, relevant to a variety of subject areas," would be beneficial so she could share the tool with classroom teachers. She also stated "quick" evaluation tools were a must because of scheduling constraints and the inability for educators to carve out extra time in a school day. Another Special Education/Intervention teacher shared her preferences and stated, "assessments that depict what a student knows… help with report writing or sharing with colleagues to formulate an overall profile of the learner". Other Special Education/ Intervention teachers mentioned that assessment tools should include, "blank templates that

can be used for many students" in addition to tools which can be, "made student or goal-specific... to ease the collection process". Another Special Education/Intervention teacher noted that "simple" tracking resources would be the most helpful, also, "anything that guides future or further instruction" would be appreciated. A few of the Special Education/Intervention teachers stated, "resources that can be shared with colleagues" and "are informative" are important, also, a "multitude of assessments all in one place" would be valuable.

General education teachers. Of the 20 general education teachers I consulted over the six-week study, four teachers work at the high school level, and 16 of the teachers work in an elementary school on a daily basis. The teachers I spoke to have the most varied age range of student interaction, educating students from Kindergarten to Grade 10, as compared to other study participants. I did not record specific information on the levels of student need in teacher's classrooms. However, I did note that the majority of the teachers I conferred with are required to differentiate instruction; therefore, provide alternative assessment for their learners. I analyzed and grouped teaching staff comments into six codes: (a) easy, (b) evidence/ proof of learning, (c) quick, (d) visual, (e) adaptable/ multi-use, and (f) comprehensive resource.

The following quotes represent examples of comments made by general education Teachers in relation to assessment. One teacher indicated, "easy to use" and "quick" resources that also, "assist with reporting" were preferred. Another teacher mentioned, "resources that give a visual representation… to show what a student can do, and where he or she may have deficits" was desired. An additional teacher stated, "resources that provide

alternate evaluation methods" and "help to accurately report on students' progress" are necessary.

General education teachers expressed a need for an assessment resource that could be applicable to learners with exceptional needs and alternative programming. One teacher noted, "… I don't really know how to evaluate students doing alternate curriculum so other assessments for non-typical students are a must" [the assessment needs to] "show what my student can, and cannot do". An additional teacher mentioned that she needed a, " useful, comprehensive resource… one that has everything in it" so there was no need to "hunt for data collection material" or "create something". Another teacher expressed a desire for assessments that, "visibly depict where a student is at" and can be "used to show parents their child's skills". One teacher, with a number of students that require differentiation noted, "assessments that are useful for multiple students" and can be "modified to fit each individual student and each specific goal" would be valued.

Of the 20 general education teachers consulted, 10 comments were made in support of assessment tools that provide evidence or proof of learning. Six comments were made regarding the importance of a comprehensive resource, and seven mentions were made in relation to a desire for tools that provided visible evidence of learning.

Administrators and district/ resource staff. I had conversations with one Administrator and three District/ Resource Support Staff during the six-week study, regarding alternative assessments for students with exceptional learning needs. Within Nechako Lakes School District 91, Administrators and District/ Resource Support Staff assist Special Education teachers and other school staff in the development of education

District/ Resource Support Staff stated, "teachers need tools that support and direct their teaching" while "parents need to be able to *see* their child's progress".

These comments support the need for a resource that has evaluation materials which support both students and teachers. The Administrator commented on the continual process of evaluating students. He stated, "learning is ever-changing; an assessment that can be used over and over to track the same data at different times is needed to take inventory of where learners start, and where they end up".

Data I gathered from consulting 41 educators from Nechako Lakes School District 91 was valuable. My colleagues provided me with good ideas and suggestions to support the foundation of my comprehensive handbook on alternative assessment. I am confident that the tools within the handbook will be applicable to educators who are responsible for assessing the learning of students with exceptionalities. Even though each educator has unique student needs, the data my colleagues provided, revealed many commonalities, which became more apparent after each phase of coding.

Coded Data

Once the conversation notes were coded, I amalgamated the codes into one list in order to merge the information, and consider the codes as a whole collection. I felt a cohesive list would aid in creating themes. A range of educators, regardless of job position, expressed a need for an assessment resource that would assist with determining the development and learning of multiple students with exceptionalities. Educators wanted a resource that covered an array of topics, and offered a variety of assessment types.

During the six-week study, I consulted 41 educators from various schools within Nechako Lakes School District 91. From authentic conversations I developed 86 codes that pertained to alternative assessment, and the evaluation of students with exceptionalities in public school settings. Many of the colleagues I consulted have high levels of post-secondary education; however, assessment of students with exceptionalities was something many educators admitted they were not confident with.

A number of the educators mentioned that an alternative assessment resource, which could be used for determining the abilities and cognitive growth of students with exceptionalities in their classrooms, would be valuable. The educators' conviction that this type of resource was needed, made my initial decision to create an assessment handbook have more merit, and the process of gathering ideas and developing evaluation templates became more personally meaningful. I was excited to be able to create a document that other educators might use as part of their teaching repertoire. The result of having conversations with my colleagues, lead me to believe that many teachers have not found an applicable assessment resource they were inclined to use, and if one was available that contained the tools they were looking for, they would put it to use.

Educational resources that are relevant and easy to navigate are likely to get the most use! More educators will be inclined to refer to an assessment handbook if it takes little effort to apply. Twenty-five percent of the participant responses indicate that assessment resources need to contain tools that are easy to navigate and require no more than minimal effort to complete.

Educators used phrases like "uncomplicated", "concise", and "simple" to describe preferred assessment tools. Therefore, assessment tools that are self-explanatory, with straightforward layouts, will make an assessment resource more user-friendly. I surmised that educators do not attempt to use assessment tools that have complex directions, or are deemed too difficult to complete. Assessment tools that are straight-forward are important so that educators can utilize a resource they are comfortable and confident using to determine the learning of students with exceptionalities. An appropriate tool that is both relevant and simple to use will likely get ample use.

Assessment tools that provide evidence of student learning are important. Determining a baseline, and then assessing over a period of time to show learning, or progress, is a substantial part of alternative programming for student with exceptionalities. Fourteen percent of comments from educators noted that proof of achievement is foundational to assessment. One educator noted, "it's not enough to intuitively *know* a student has made progress, we must be able to *show* progress by collecting evidence". Assessments that can be given at the commencement of a program and then re-administered a number of times as the school year progresses show where a student started, and what he or she has achieved over time.

Assessment tools that are, or can be made, goal/student-specific were important to thirteen percent of the educators consulted in the study. Students that are designated as having exceptional learning needs because they meet specific criteria presented by the British Columbia Ministry of Education, require an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The IEP contains goals and objectives based on learner needs. Teachers have a duty to report on student achievement, and teachers of students with an IEP, in British Columbia,

Table 3

Colour-coded Data Regarding Alternative Assessment Obtained from Conversations with Educators

Code	Mode Frequency
Easy	21
Proof/ evidence of learning	12
Goal/student-specific	11
Quick	11
Informative	9
Diverse/ variety	8
Visible	8
Adaptable	6

are required to report on student progress in relation to each goal in an IEP, three times per school year. Assessments that are goal-specific allow educators to track and report on a learner's achievement and subsequent development in relation to that goal. Pre-made assessments that target specific goals will save educators time, reduce the need for educators to create new assessments, and also support tracking consistency. One educator commented, "keeping student goals in mind at all times is difficult, having a template to use that is targeted at a certain goal, is necessary. It helps me to keep in mind exactly what I am tracking".

Assessment resources that are also quick to use are appreciated by some educators as evidence of thirteen percent of the responses reflecting this notion. Some educators expressed that they want to be able to locate relevant assessments in a timely fashion, and administer them swiftly during a busy school day. Trying to determine which assessment might be most useful will not be difficult because the titles of each assessment in my handbook offer an idea about what will be assessed. The sections within the handbook have titles that reflect what they contain. A few educators desire assessment tools that can be used "as it happens" and "can be administered in a small window of time" due to the eventful nature of a school day, so a comprehensive handbook which provides templates that are concise supports educators in quickly tracking students' progress.

Additionally, the templates provided in my handbook are simple to navigate and do not generally involve much time to complete. The majority of assessment templates within the resource I created only require the assessor to record brief notes or check marks, which can be done during the school day, when it is convenient for the educator. In the case where the assessment templates are longer than one page, they are presented checklist-style or rubric format and involve minimal time to complete.

Eleven percent of the colleagues in my study noted that an assessment option, which provides information that guides teaching, is essential. Assessments that can be administered, and then used to support educational planning is useful to educators. Also, assessment resources that can be shared with School Based Teams or the students' teacher the following year, help with transitioning a student from one classroom to the next. Educators mentioned wanting alternative assessment tools, "that guide and support what each designated student needs to learn". Often, students with exceptionalities require

differentiation, and in some cases, completely altered curriculum is created for the student. Educators need to know the point at which a student is starting, what he or she is aiming for, and effective instruction methods and topics needed to help students reach individualized goals.

A comprehensive alternative assessment resource was mentioned as a positive aspect by ten percent of the educators in this study. The data revealed that some educators want a resource they can photocopy templates from, or alter, depending on the assessment target. Pre-made templates allow educators to make copies of what they need, without having to create something new for each student. Also, using the same template in succession to monitor the progress of a student ensures consistency and more accurate tracking. Offering a wide range of assessments in one resource will cover many domain areas, and thus support educators in thoroughly assessing students with exceptionalities across the curriculum, or according to the goals in an IEP.

Most teachers have to track two or more goals, with two-to-three objectives each, for every designated student in their class. This information supports the need for an abundance of educational assessment tools within one resource. Teacher assessment loads are immense with evaluating typical students, so the additional assessments involved in tracking students who require varying levels of differentiation can be overwhelming, especially if relevant resources are not readily available. One teacher noted, "I have no extra time to create assessments, I need a resource that has everything I need!".

Ten percent of my colleagues reported that assessments which offer visible evidence and "provide a snapshot of student learning" are desired. Colleague comments indicate

assessment tools that show a visual representation of a learner's skill-base are preferred. Phrases like "shows both the gaps and the learning" and "highlights the positives and the negatives" were used to describe assessment tools that would meet educator needs. One educator mentioned, "visual proof of what my students can and cannot do would be so valuable... using a scale and highlighting outcomes or objectives that have been met would allow me to look for patterns, compare each students' progress over time and most importantly, inform my teaching". An LSW noted that a tally or checklist-style tool would allow the classroom teacher to "see student behaviour in a specific setting", where the teacher "would not be able to monitor the times a behaviour occurred when they are in the middle of teaching".

Rubrics, checklists, tally charts, and behaviour charts that break observation time down into measureable sections provide the most visual support. Rubric assessments which provide a visual snapshot, quickly show teachers what a student can do, and where he or she needs remediation. Checklists and tally charts indicate with a mark the number of times a behaviour was observed; therefore, educators can quickly look at the results of these visual assessments in order to make judgments.

Templates that provide scoring data, but can be altered to meet specific needs, were desired by seven percent of educators. Adaptable tools are useful because they provide a structure, but also offer the freedom to make them student-specific and save educators from having to create brand new assessments for each student that requires differentiation. Comments such as, " blank, but with pre-set structure" and "already made, but can be added to" in relation to assessment templates, supports the need for tools that are pre-made, but

allow for individualization based on need. Rubrics, tally charts, checklists, and logs are assessment tools with capacity to be adapted.

A number of specific needs were mentioned by educators in relation to alternative assessment, specifically assessment of students with exceptional learning needs. Educational texts contained numerous articles that noted several important factors regarding alternative assessment. I analyzed 200 text segments and assigned 271 codes, then combined the text codes with the 86 educator comment-codes in order to determine what educators and researchers find valuable in relation to evaluating students with exceptional learning needs. My purpose was to use this data to formulate tools and create an alternative assessment resource that would support British Columbia educators.

The data I collected from educational text segments and educator comments was very similar; therefore, the codes I assigned were often repeated. I surmised that words that occur numerous times are salient in the minds of respondents; therefore, words that are repeated by a number of different individuals are significant, and must guide the creation of my alternative assessment handbook. At the conclusion of my research, I had 357 codes; 271 codes created from educational texts, and 86 codes from educator comments. Through the process of coding, and then colour-coding to further assimilate the initial code words, I determined 15 unique code headings that pertain to alternative assessment.

Table 4 is a culmination of codes and the frequency which they occur. The 15 codes are combined from my research using educational text sources and colleague conversations. Since the original codes I created from the texts and conversations totaled 357, I am confident that I reached code-saturation with the research data I consulted. Once I had the

codes grouped according to colour, I was able to assign the codes into cohesive categories in order to create themes.

Themes

After working through the coding process, I began to develop themes based on alternative assessment and the evaluation of students with exceptionalities. I implemented a cut-and-sort technique to develop overarching notions and create themes, based on alternative assessment (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). I considered the 15 codes from the combined list and began to sort them electronically in a Word document, using cut-and-paste technology to create lists based on commonalities.

In relation to the actual assessments within a resource, one code was most noted; the code *goal-specific*, occurred 73 times and represents 20 percent of the total codes. Since I was trying to determine what educators' desire in alternative assessments, I rationalized that the function of differentiated assessment is to target students' specific needs. Using that criterion, I wrote down *purpose of assessment* as the first theme heading. With this guiding notion I searched through the remaining codes and listed the ones that related to the rationale of alternative assessment. This theme included five specific purposes, such as assessments that: (a) provide information for intervention purposes, (b) provide proof/ evidence of student skill level, (c) guide teaching and instruction, (d) offer information and support accountability specific to reporting on a learner, and (e) promote the equality of all learners.

Table 4

Coded Data Regarding Alternative Assessment Obtained from Educational Texts and Conversations with Educators

Code	Mode Frequency
Goal/student-specific	73
Diverse/ multifaceted/variety	63
Proof/ evidence of learning	45
Authentic	37
Guide Instruction	25
Easy	21
Intervention-based	19
Accountability	15
Quick	13
Promoting equality	11
Informative	9
Continual	9
Visible	8
Adaptable	6
Proactive change needed	3

The next code I looked at was *diverse/ multifaceted/ variety*, with 17% of the total. Since the information I gathered through the study phase indicated a desire for a variety of assessment options, I assigned that notion as a theme. V*ariance of assessment* developed as a theme based on the need for diverse and varied assessment options. In my opinion, the word variance, in relation to assessment, implies a multitude of evaluation options, layouts, and templates that can be adapted, included in one resource.

Next I considered the code *easy*. I noted that *easy* is a quality which describes an assessment; therefore, I assigned the title, and thus theme of the first list, *qualities of assessment*. From there I searched the remaining codes for other assessment qualities. The six codes that represent *qualities of assessment* include: (a) easy, (b) quick (c) visual, (d) authentic, (e) continual, and (f) adaptive.

The last code to consider refers to the expressed need for proactive amendments to be made to current assessment of students with exceptional learning needs. The educational texts I consulted indicated a need for diversification and alternative options for evaluating the progress of students with exceptional learning needs. Therefore, I assigned *importance of alternative assessment* as a theme.

The coding and theming processes were informative. Discussing assessments and having authentic conversations with colleagues allowed me to step away from my own assumptions and learn more about what other educators find useful regarding the assessment of students with exceptionalities. The use of a three-column reflective journal was appropriate for my note-taking and colour coding needs. It allowed me to have orderly, visually distinctive research notes, which made it easy do the initial coding, and then chunk

similar ideas accordingly. Additionally, using a three-column system gave me space to sketch and scribble ideas adjacent to the notes and codes, for actual assessments I intended to create. The process of having conversations, collecting quotes from texts and conversations, coding data and developing themes was informative.

I was able to gather information from a wide variety of educators, with diverse backgrounds, which helped me to develop a larger knowledge base. This created the foundation for my alternative assessment handbook. My goal was to create assessments that are simple to use, and can be done quickly, while still providing accurate data. In researching alternate assessment resources, I did not locate a comprehensive source that included a mix of academic, behavioural, and functional skill evaluation tools; therefore, I sought out to create a useful tool for my colleagues, and felt that a handbook containing alternative assessments would serve this purpose.

Byrnes (2012) stated that people who refer to handbooks are looking to cut through an abundance of literature to find what they are looking for quickly and efficiently. Readers choose handbooks that are practical, and easy to navigate to find information. Using this notion, in conjunction with the information gathered from consulting educators, I aimed to develop assessments that can be used with a multitude of students. The educational texts, educator comments, and lack of comprehensive assessment resources, lead me to create a plethora of tools, including those that offer a visual snapshot of a learners' development, and can also be used for guiding the reporting process. As a result, I believe that the alternative assessment handbook I created will meet the needs of many educators who are looking for a tool to assist them with assessing the learning and progress of students with exceptionalities in their classrooms.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I reported the results of my action research study. I included information I obtained from educational texts and colleague conversation, in addition to the content analysis, data coding process, and theme development.

I consulted ten texts with information pertaining to education assessment; specifically the evaluation of learning for students with exceptionalities. I selected text segments from each source, from random chapters within articles and books. I collected 200 text-segments to code. I scrutinized the written segments and assigned a code to each portion of text, culminating with 271 codes. The codes I assigned related to the theme of each segment of text. The top three codes include (a) goal/student-specific, with 62 codes, (b) multifaceted/ diverse assessment tools, with 43 codes, and (c) provides proof/ evidence with 33 codes. Codes were based on the overall content of the text segment and after coding the textual data, I began consultations with educational staff.

Over a six-week period, I spoke to 41 educators about alternative assessment options. The 41 educators I spoke to varied in experience and responsibilities, and included Learning Support Workers, general education Teachers from Primary, Intermediate, and Secondary school classrooms, Teachers on Call, Special Education/ Intervention Teachers, Administrators, and District Resource/ Support Staff. Regardless of job description, they indicated a need for an alternative assessment resource, focused on assessing the development of students with exceptionalities. I collected an abundance of quotes from authentic colleague conversations. Using the quotes from educators, I analyzed the data and

created 86 codes. More than half of the educators noted that assessment tools that are easy to use are preferential.

After coding the information I collected from texts and colleague conversations, I combined the 357 codes into one list in order to consider the codes as a whole unit. Analyzing the whole list, I assigned colour to the codes based on similar meanings in order to separate ideas and limit redundancy. Once the repeated codes were eliminated, I had 15 unique codes. The unique codes allowed me to consider overall meaning and determine themes.

I used a cut-and-paste strategy in an electronic word document to separate the codes into cohesive categories. When this was complete, four themes were evident. The themes include: (a) qualities of assessment, (b) purpose of assessment, (c) variance of assessment and (d) importance of alternative assessment. Using the four themes as a foundation for my handbook, and the guiding question, *What are educators looking for in terms of alternative assessment for students with exceptionalities?* I began to develop alternative assessments that would meet the needs of general education Teachers in British Columbian public schools.

The handbook I created is a comprehensive resource and includes information on alternative assessments, suggestions for accommodations relevant to students with unique learning needs, and a wide variety of assessments related to academic learning, functional life skills, and behaviour tracking. The resource is applicable to a variety of educators and offers assessments relevant to a multitude of students with exceptionalities.

In Chapter 5 I present an alternative assessment handbook for educators who are looking for a comprehensive resource with a multitude of assessment tools, applicable to students with exceptional learning needs. The tools are straightforward, quick to use, and show a picture of what a student can demonstrate. The templates can be used to support goal tracking for a variety of students, and the assessments can be shared with colleagues, and also parents, as evidence of student development.

Chapter 5: Tools and Templates for Assessment in Special Education: A Handbook for Educators

The introductory chapter of this project addressed the need for an alternative assessment tool relevant to educators of students with varied abilities. Chapter 2 reviewed current literature pertaining to assessment types and purposes. Chapter 3 included information on the methodologies I used to gather information and conduct my research on assessment tools that would be applicable to a variety of educators, for a myriad of students. In Chapter 4 I reported the results gathered from my research. By coding and collating the notes I took after colleague conversations, I was able to determine what specifically educators want to terms of assessments for students with exceptionalities. The following chapter contains the actual handbook that was developed as a tool educators could use to assess the progress of students with exceptionalities in relation to academic learning, life skill function, and behavioural competency. The resource is a comprehensive tool that educators can use to assess students, including those with exceptionalities. A review of the literature and collegiate conversations demonstrated that there is a need for an assessment resource relevant to students with exceptionalities.

The handbook that follows is a compilation of templates, charts, tallies and rubrics that can be used to assess student learning. Also included are a few larger checklists and some quick assessment activities that teachers can use to get a quick snapshot of what their students do, or do not know. Some of the assessments in the handbook are based on other published assessment tools, but have been altered so that they were easier to use, or more student-specific. The handbook is easy to navigate, and can be used for typical and non-typical students, by any educator.

Components of my Handbook

The intention of my handbook is to present an array of assessment tools applicable to the education and evaluation of a variety of students with exceptional learning needs. The focus of the handbook is to represent what professional research and educational practitioners revealed about educational assessment options for students with alternative learning needs; therefore, an in-depth qualitative content analysis was not required. My university supervisor agreed with this approach since the majority of data I used to create the handbook came from teachers and professionals in the education filed. From the data I collected, I was able to assign codes, and then themes, which helped me to form an in-depth understanding of what a sample of British Columbia educators' desire in relation to alternative assessment. Using this information, I developed a user-friendly, comprehensive alternative assessment resource for educators.

I intend for my alternative assessment handbook to be appropriate for educators in need of tools to assist them in evaluating the progress and growth of a variety of students. Included in the resource, is an array of relevant evaluations, specific to the assessment of students with alternative learning needs. The quick-reference, user-friendly resource provides templates and tools that general education teachers in British Columbian public schools can use in their classrooms to help support their practice.

My handbook includes five main sections relating to the assessment of students with exceptionalities. The introductory sections of the handbook are brief. My intent is to provide enough information about alternative assessment, without overwhelming the reader with data, and instead allow them to delve into the actual assessment templates. The three

main sections that follow the introduction are broken down into sub-sections, which present specific evaluation tools, relevant to academic, functional life-skills, and behavioural learning.

The first main section of the handbook introduces the concept of assessment for British Columbian public school students with exceptionalities. Assessments for students with exceptionalities are generally not norm-based; therefore, alternative measuring devices need to be utilized. The concepts of alternative assessment qualities and purpose are introduced. Three sub-sections follow the first section of the handbook.

The first sub-section of the handbook explores adaptations in relation to determining the growth of students with alternative learning needs. Chapman and King (2005) noted that differentiation is the key component in educating students with alternative learning needs, so I included a section in the handbook that presents an assortment of adaptations, relevant to an array of students and school situations. This section of the handbook provides a categorized list of adaptations educators can use, depending on the in-school activity, location, or altered need. Adaptations within the list include differentiation of materials, setting, location, information presentation, and alternations that can be made to lessons, tasks, or curriculum.

Adaptations are an important part of this handbook because they support educators in providing differentiation options for a multitude of students. Often times, adaptations and accommodations need to be made for students with exceptionalities in general education classrooms. During my research, a teacher noted, "my designated student cannot be given the same test as her peers so I need strategies so she can do *a* test. I want her to feel

included rather than segregated". The adaptations list provided in the handbook offers methods for altering in-school activities that support the education of students with alternative learning needs.

The second sub-section of the handbook includes information on the relevance of assessment related to students with exceptionalities within the British Columbia Ministry of Education context. Educators that I spoke to stressed that assessment is an important part of all students' education and determining level of performance in relation to learning outcomes, or individualized programs is foundational to planning and teaching students. Students with alternative learning needs in BC public schools also require learning outcome tracking; therefore, I included information on teaching and assessment accommodations, as well as alternative assessment suggestions for students who require alternative levels of differentiation. Chapman & King (2005) noted that teachers need access to assessment tools that support appropriate instruction for students who need alternative education. My handbook provides alternative assessment options that target differentiation. The assessments included in my handbook are multidimensional and can be made student-specific, thus supporting student-appropriate curriculum. This sub-section is relevant to BC public educators because in order for a resource to be useful, it needs to contain tools that are linked to BC educational guidelines and curriculum. Also, not all general education Teachers will be familiar with the multitude of accommodations applicable for students with exceptionalities.

The third sub-section of the handbook contains a short paragraph related to the main educational domains, which the handbook addresses through the presentation of assessment templates. The domain areas include student behaviour, academic learning, and functional

life-skills. These three domains are essential components of alternative education as noted by educator comments. Buhagiar (2007) reported that classroom assessment needs to be revisited to better meet the needs of all students. With this notion in mind, I created relevant assessments in the main domain areas for students who take part in specialized programs that focus on remedial academics, positive behaviour, and functional skills.

The second main section of the handbook presents templates relevant to the most common areas of educational assessment discussed in the previous section; specifically, behavioural, functional skills, and academic learning. The three main assessment areas are presented separately, and each contain a variety of alternative evaluations including checklists, observation charts, tally sheets, and rubrics. Educators noted that they appreciate being able to limit their resource readings to short and easily digestible pieces, specific to the topic they are interested in. I believe this idea also applies to all educators who are responsible for assessing the learning and development of students with exceptionalities, and are determined to find user-friendly, alternative assessment tools. Since educators prefer assessment resources, and assessment tools that are easy to understand and can be implemented quickly I created a variety of checklists, tally charts, and rubrics that do not take too much time to complete and are one-page snapshots of evaluative data. A resource that offers an assortment of tools, is useful to more people.

This section of the handbook is the largest, and contains many tools educators can use to assess student learning. Providing a wide selection of assessment tools is important because each of the 41 survey participants indicated that an alternative assessment resource was needed, for varying reasons; belying the necessity of varied assessments within. Woods, Parkinson, and Lewis (2010) reported that inscriptive style assessments are not well

suited to the majority of students with exceptionalities. They note that practical assessments, or those that observe a student demonstrating a skill or behaviour, are most beneficial. In support of this notion, I created a number of assessment tools that allow educators to observe students in order to gather data regarding level of performance.

In my teaching career, behaviour, functional skills, and academics are generally the focus of Individualized Education Plans; therefore, these areas are the basis of the assessment handbook I created. A few student-self assessment tools are also presented within the handbook so students can assess aspects of their own learning. Each of the assessment domains includes a number of Blackline master assessments relevant to an array of educational teaching and learning areas. The behavioural and life-skill assessment portions are mainly composed of rubrics, checklists, observation-style evaluations, and also quick formative assessment tools. The academic section includes assessments that can be used to assess rudimentary-level academic skills.

The alternative assessment handbook will benefit experienced educators, newly certified teachers, administration, and a variety of support staff. Since a comprehensive assessment guidebook for British Columbian teachers in the public school system, which includes generic educational assessment templates, is not readily available; this resource will help to fill a niche in Special Education. The handbook is comprehensive, easy to reference, and most importantly, a valuable tool for any educator who is looking for alternative assessment tools that measure the behavioural, academic, and social growth of students with exceptionalities.

The quick-reference handbook contains a variety of tracking tools suited to evaluating educational progress for exceptional students. In terms of domain range, academics, functional skills, and behaviour assessments are presented in the handbook, each with a number of unique templates, giving educators many options to choose from. Since each student with exceptionalities varies in ability and educational need throughout the school year, educators have to track and monitor a number of goals using a plethora of assessments. Oftentimes, new assessments have to be created because no two student's needs are alike. My universal resource book, with reproducible templates, will help to ease the process of class-wide assessment.

This handbook is an important tool. In my experience, most general education classroom teachers are not familiar with a wide-range of exceptionalities. They do not have in-depth knowledge of provincial alternative assessment trends, and most often they are not confident in their ability to assess students with special learning needs. Many general education teachers seek help with instruction and assessing students with exceptionalities in their classrooms. Due to the large number of students who require differentiation, a variety of assessment tools are needed. The reference tool I created is applicable to a number of learning outcomes, and individualized educational goals.

Tools and Templates for Alternative Assessment:

A Handbook for Educators

By

Kari Ephrom

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What is Assessment?

Assessment refers to the process of collecting data through the use of measurement tools to determine a learner's level of proficiency in relation to a given task. In regards to the evaluation of students with exceptionalities, assessments are still given with the intent of collecting information, but the tools used to gather data tend to look different than those used for typical students in that they are student-specific or task-specific.

This handbook provides educators with a number of evaluative tools to support their assessment of students with exceptionalities in a number of domain areas. A brief introduction to adaptations, modifications, and the British Columbia Ministry of Educations requirements for evaluating students with exceptionalities in the public school system are also included in this resource.

A variety of planning and tracking tools are provided to assist with assessing students with exceptionalities. Most of the resources included are 'ready-to-use' while others are blank and can be created to suit specific assessment needs. A few student self-evaluation templates are provided as well. Additionally, an adaptation checklist is provided for tracking purposes or as a suggestion for providing differentiation for a variety of students.

It is my hope that educators will find value in this assessment resource and be able to use a variety of templates to assess the learning of their students with exceptionalities.

Adaptations and Assessment

Adaptations are teaching and assessment strategies specifically designed to accommodate a student's needs so he or she can achieve the learning outcomes of the curriculum and demonstrate mastery of concepts. Adaptations occur when teachers differentiate instruction, assessments, or materials in order to create a flexible, individualized learning experience for a student or group of students based on need. Adaptations can be provided in a variety of settings and to all students, both with and without exceptionalities.

Adaptations can be thought of as adjustments to how students:

- take in information (input)
- participate in learning activities (engagement/process)
- demonstrate their learning (output)

Adaptations might include alternative formats, strategies or settings, and may involve changes to:

- the social and/or physical learning environment
- instructional methods
- learning materials, resources, and topics
- response formats and assessment procedures
- time frames for learning

Assessment of Students with Exceptionalities in British Columbia Schools

The British Columbia Ministry of Education defines assessment as an organized process of gathering information on students learning in order to make appropriate educational decisions. The process of gathering the data can be a team effort and is ultimately used to identify the student's strengths and needs, set goals, and can also lead to the identification and implementation of student-specific educational strategies.

Standards for students with exceptional needs are developed with high but suitable expectations for student achievement. Students with exceptionalities are expected to achieve some, most, or all provincial curriculum outcomes with support.

Assessment Domains

Educational assessment of students with exceptionalities generally involves looking at a student's behavior in a variety of settings, the level at which they can demonstrate functional life skills, and their proficiency in relation to ability-level academics. Therefore the general assessment domains include behavior, life skills and academics. This handbook offers assessment templates associated with each of those domains.

Types of Assessments

There are a variety of assessment tools that provide valuable data in relation to student learning. Some assessment tools are simple to use and quick to use while others require the evaluator to be subjective and make judgments based on what they see.

Checklists

A checklist is the simplest form of scoring a student's assessment of learning in relation to behaviour. This form of assessment confirms that each behavior, action, or task will be judged using the same criteria. Checklists can be used to record information from an observation, responses to an oral assessment, or to evaluate student products. Checklists provide specific criteria for assessing student learning. The statements outline what the teacher expects to see in student responses. Beside each criterion is a space to indicate whether that criterion was met or not, or whether a specific behaviour occurred. Checklists do not delve into 'why' behaviour occurred.

Rubrics

A rubric is a scaled assessment that lists criteria for each characteristic and gives a value for the level of proficiency. A rubric helps a teacher sustain consistent attention to the evaluative criteria for each student or assignment. Most rubrics consist of objectives, performance characteristics, and points or scores that indicate the degree to which the objectives were met. Rubrics can be used in the instructional process as they are generally developed before instruction begins and discussed with the students before work commences. Checklists do not delve into 'why' behaviour occurred.

Anecdotal Notes

Note writing requires that an educator make some observations and then record notes about specific behaviours or actions they witness. Written notes are an appropriate way to keep track of ideas in relation to behaviours but they can be opinion based and relevant to the environment of the moment of

observation. While note- taking can be valuable because it allows the recorder to write down exactly what happened, when and with whom, note-taking is time consuming.

Charts

Charts are pre-made templates used to track specific observable behaviour. They take a number of different forms and require an educator to fill in information. Charts can be useful tools because quite often they can be filled in with succinct notes.

Tallies

An educator can use a tally to record observed behaviour by making a mark to indicate behaviour occurred. Tallies can be used for short periods during the day or even used all day. Tally observations can be done without much thought and give a quick picture of how often behaviour occurred.

Behaviour	Tally	Total
calling out	III	3

Behavioural Assessment Charts

Behavioural Assessment and Planning Tool

Student: _____ Date: _____

Specific Observed Behaviours:

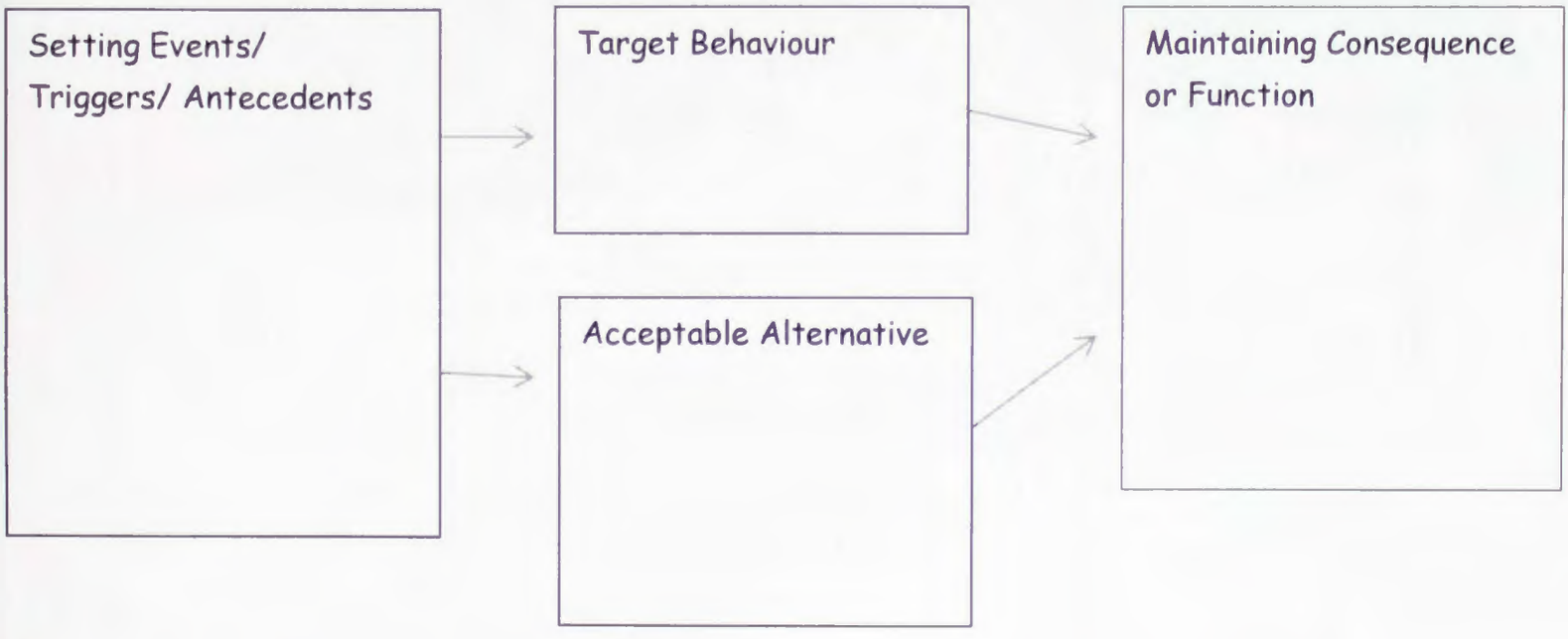
	Key Points to keep in mind	What will this look like in my classroom?	Resources I may need
Strategies to Try:			

Interventions Needed:			
Methods of Data Collection:			

Behaviour Modification Planning Chart

Student: _____ Date: _____

Observer: _____



Setting Events Modifications	Antecedent Modifications	Behaviour Teaching	Consequence Modifications

Setting Events Modifications	Antecedent Modifications	Behaviour Teaching	Consequence Modifications

ABC Chart

Student: _____ Date: _____

Grade: _____ Observer: _____

Staff Present & Role:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Time & Subject/Activity	Antecedent what occurred prior to behaviour?	Behaviour specific, observable behaviour	Consequence what happened as a result of behaviour?

Time & Subject	Antecedent	Behaviour	Consequence

Behavioural Scatter Plot - On Task - Off Task

Student: _____

Date: _____

Observer: _____

On= On task **Off= Off Task**

	Subject & Date ⇨								
_____ minute intervals ⇩									

Totals:

On Task behaviour _____

Off Task behaviour _____

Notes:_____

_____

Behavioural Assessment Tallies

Independent Greetings Tally

Student: _____ Date: _____

Observer: _____

Goal: To increase the number of responses made in relation to peer greetings

	Yes = a response	No = no response given	Total
Respond independently to peer greeting			Y N
Respond independently to staff greeting			Y N

*If prompted to give a response to a greeting, please indicated with a **P** in the **Yes** column and also give a total prompted score in the total tally column.

Off- Task Behaviour Tally #1

Student: _____ Date: _____

Observer: _____

This tally represents observed behaviour during a _____ minute observation.

Time / Subject/ Activity	Observed Behaviour	Tally
	Out of seat	
	Out of seat, wandering room	
	Laying on floor	
	Hiding under desk/ table/ in corner of room	
	Leaving room without permission	
	Fidget with item	
	At peers desk	

Additional notes: _____

_____

_____

Off-Task Behaviour Tally #2

Student: _____ Date: _____

Observer: _____ Time frame _____

	Hiding (going under table/ chair)	Hands on peers	Head down, refusing to work	Refusal to comply with adult requests	Throwing objects (around room or at others)	Raised voice	Notes
Classroom							
Times of transition							

Inappropriate Behaviour Tally

Student: _____ Date: _____

Observer: _____ Time frame _____

	Hands on Peers	Physical Contact - accelerated hands on (jumping, pushing, running into)	Refusal to comply with adult requests	Notes
Outside (morning/ recess/ lunch)				
Hallways				
Classroom (gymnasium, computer lab, library)				

Calling- Out Tally

Student: _____ Date: _____

Observer: _____

This tally represents observed behaviour during a _____ minute observation.

Time / Subject/ Activity	Observed Behaviour	Tally
	Calling out answers/ responses/ ideas to teacher	
	Calling out to peers in the classroom (off topic)	

Additional notes: _____

Work Commencement - With Prompting/ Without Prompting Tally

Student: _____ Date: _____

Observer: _____

* Complete one tally sheet per subject, use a separate sheet for each subsequent subject. Different activities within the same subject should be indicated and also tracked on tally sheet.

Time / Subject/ Activity	Observed Behaviour	Tally
	Began assigned work **with prompting**	
	Began assigned work **without prompting**	

Additional notes: _____

Behavioural Assessment Rubrics

'Following Directions' Rubric

Student: _____ Date: _____

Observer: _____

Goal: to follow staff directions without redirection or prompts

	 1 Not Yet	 2 Approaching	 3 Fully Meeting	 4 Exceeding
9:30-10:00	Not following directions to familiar tasks 5 or more times	Follow directions with 3-4 prompts	Follow directions with 1-2 prompts	Follow directions with no prompting
10:00-10:30	Not following directions to familiar tasks 5 or more times	Follow directions with 3-4 prompts	Follow directions with 1-2 prompts	Follow directions with no prompting
10:30-11:00	Not following directions to familiar tasks 5 or more times	Follow directions with 3-4 prompts	Follow directions with 1-2 prompts	Follow directions with no prompting
11:00 - 11:30	Not following directions to familiar tasks 5 or more times	Follow directions with 3-4 prompts	Follow directions with 1-2 prompts	Follow directions with no prompting

11:30-12:00	Not following directions to familiar tasks 5 or more times	Follow directions with 3-4 prompts	Follow directions with 1-2 prompts	Follow directions with no prompting
12:30-1:00	Not following directions to familiar tasks 5 or more times	Follow directions with 3-4 prompts	Follow directions with 1-2 prompts	Follow directions with no prompting
1:00-1:30	Not following directions to familiar tasks 5 or more times	Follow directions with 3-4 prompts	Follow directions with 1-2 prompts	Follow directions with no prompting
1:30-2:00	Not following directions to familiar tasks 5 or more times	Follow directions with 3-4 prompts	Follow directions with 1-2 prompts	Follow directions with no prompting
2:30-3:00	Not following directions to familiar tasks 5 or more times	Follow directions with 3-4 prompts	Follow directions with 1-2 prompts	Follow directions with no prompting

Notes for the day: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

'Hands to Self' Rubric

Student: _____ Date: _____

Observer: _____

Goal: to keep hands to self and off of others

	 1 Not Yet	 2 Approaching	 3 Fully Meeting	 4 Exceeding
9:30-10:00	Hurting others physically more than 3 times	Hands on others 2-3 times in 30 minutes.	Hands on 1 other person in 30 minutes	No hands on any one
10:00-10:30	Hurting others physically more than 3 times	Hands on others 2-3 times in 30 minutes.	Hands on 1 other person in 30 minutes	No hands on any one
10:30-11:00	Hurting others physically more than 3 times	Hands on others 2-3 times in 30 minutes.	Hands on 1 other person in 30 minutes	No hands on any one

11:00 - 11:30	Hurting others physically more than 3 times	Hands on others 2-3 times in 30 minutes.	Hands on 1 other person in 30 minutes	No hands on any one
11:30-12:00	Hurting others physically more than 3 times	Hands on others 2-3 times in 30 minutes.	Hands on 1 other person in 30 minutes	No hands on any one
12:30-1:00	Hurting others physically more than 3 times	Hands on others 2-3 times in 30 minutes.	Hands on 1 other person in 30 minutes	No hands on any one
1:00-1:30	Hurting others physically more than 3 times	Hands on others 2-3 times in 30 minutes.	Hands on 1 other person in 30 minutes	No hands on any one
1:30-2:00	Hurting others physically	Hands on others 2-3 times in 30 minutes.	Hands on 1 other person in 30 minutes	No hands on any one

	more than 3 times			
2:30-3:00	Hurting others physically more than 3 times	Hands on others 2-3 times in 30 minutes.	Hands on 1 other person in 30 minutes	No hands on any one

Notes for the day: _____

_____

_____

_____

'Running Away' Rubric

Student: _____ Date: _____

Observer: _____

Goal: to remain in the same area with staff and classroom peers

	 1 Not Yet	 2 Approaching	 3 Fully Meeting	 4 Exceeding
9:30-10:00	Running away 3-5 times	Running away 2 times	Running away 1 time	No running away at all
10:00-10:30	Running away 3-5 times	Running away 2 times	Running away 1 time	No running away at all
10:30-11:00	Running away 3-5 times	Running away 2 times	Running away 1 time	No running away at all
11:00 - 11:30	Running away 3-5 times	Running away 2 times	Running away 1 time	No running away at all

11:30-12:00	Running away 3-5 times	Running away 2 times	Running away 1 time	No running away at all
12:30-1:00	Running away 3-5 times	Running away 2 times	Running away 1 time	No running away at all
1:00-1:30	Running away 3-5 times	Running away 2 times	Running away 1 time	No running away at all
1:30-2:00	Running away 3-5 times	Running away 2 times	Running away 1 time	No running away at all
2:30-3:00	Running away 3-5 times	Running away 2 times	Running away 1 time	No running away at all

Notes for the day: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

'_____' Rubric

Student: _____ Date: _____

Observer: _____

Goal:

_____

	 1 Not Yet	 2 Approaching	 3 Fully Meeting	 4 Exceeding
9:30-10:00				
10:00-10:30				
10:30-11:00				

11:00 - 11:30				
11:30-12:00				
12:30-1:00				
1:00-1:30				
1:30-2:00				
2:30-3:00				

Notes for the day: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Functional Skill Assessment Checklists

Social Skills Checklist

Student: _____ Date: _____

Age: _____ Grade: _____

Person completing form:_____

Teacher _____ Parent _____ Support Staff _____ Other _____

Based on your observations, rate the child's skill level using the template below. If applicable, observe in a variety of situations/ environments.

Write additional information specific to the skill or situation in the comments section and indicate skills which are a priority to target for instruction.

Rating Scale

Almost Always: The child consistently displays this skill in many settings and with a variety of people.

Often: The child displays this skill in a few settings with a few people.

Sometimes: The child may demonstrate this skill, however they seldom display it.

Almost Never: The child has never, or rarely displays this skill. In their daily routine it is uncommon to see the child demonstrate this skill.

Does the child...	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Almost Never	Comments	Priority
1.1 Beginning Play Behaviours						
a. Maintain proximity to peers within 1 foot.						
b. Observe peers in play vicinity.						
c. Parallel play near peers using the same or similar materials.						
d. Imitate peers physical motions or verbalizations.						
e. Take turns during simple games (roll ball back and forth).						

Does the child...	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Almost Never	Comments	Priority
1.2 Intermediate Play Behaviours						
a. Associatively play with peers (share toys and converse about the play activity).						
b. Respond to interactions from peers (accept toy from peers, answer questions).						
c. Initiate and return greetings with peers (wave or say hello).						
d. Know acceptable ways of joining in an activity with others (offering a toy or observing play and asking to join).						

e. Invite others to play.						
f. Take turns during structured games/ activities (board games, physical movement games).						
1.3 Advanced Play Behaviour						
a. Play cooperatively with peers (take on pretend role during dramatic play, lead play).						
b. Make comments about what he/ she is playing to peers (I am making a tall tower).						
c. Organize play be suggesting a plan (Let's make a train track and then drive the trains).						
d. Follow peers play ideas.						
e. Take turns during						

unstructured activities when materials are limited						
f. Give up toys and materials to peers.						
g. Offer toys and materials to peers.						

Section 2: Emotional Regulation

Does the child...	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Almost Never	**Comments**	Priority
2.1 Understanding Emotions						
a. Identify likes and dislikes.						
b. Label emotions in relation to self.						
c. Identify emotions in others.						
d. Label emotions in others.						

e. Justify an emotion (if a boy is crying the child can say he is crying because he fell down and got hurt).						
f. Demonstrate affection towards peers (give hugs).						
g. Demonstrate empathy towards peers (feel sad if their toy breaks).						
h. Demonstrate aggressive behaviour toward others.						
i. Demonstrate aggressive behaviour towards self.						
j. Demonstrate intense fears (will not go near dogs and becomes afraid if one comes near).						
k. Uses tone of voice to convey message.						

2.2 Self-Regulation						
a. Allow others to comfort him/her if upset.						
b. Self-regulate when tense or upset (take deep breath, count to 10).						
c. Self-regulate when energy is high (count to 10, run around play ground to release energy).						
d. Use acceptable ways to express anger of frustration (says they are upset, requests a break).						
e. Deal with being teased in acceptable ways (ignore, walk away, and get support from an adult).						
f. accepts not being first in a game or activity.						

g. Says "no" in a respectable manner to things he/ she does not want to do.						
h. Accept losing at a game without becoming upset or angry.						
i. Deals with winning appropriately (does not tease or provoke players who did not win).						
j. Accept being told "no" without becoming upset.						
k. Able to say "I don't know" when they are unsure.						
2.3 Flexibility						
a. Able to make mistakes without becoming upset or angry.						
b. Accept consequences of his/ her actions/ behaviours						

without becoming upset or angry.						
c. Accept unexpected changes.						
d. Accept changes in routine.						
e. Continue to try when something is difficult.						
2.4 Problem Solving						
a. Claim and defend possessions appropriately.						
b. Identify and define problems.						
c. Generate solutions.						
d. Carry out solutions by negotiating or compromising.						

Life Skills Checklist

Student: _____ Date: _____

Age: _____ Grade: _____

Observer: _____

Interactions with others

__ Follow directions

__ Learn to be a good listener

__ Take turns

__ Use manners

__ Shake hands and greet others

__ Make eye contact during conversations

__ Show respect for adults

__ Resolve conflicts

__ Understand behavior according to occasion or situation

__ Able to compromise

Time Management

__ Adhere to a daily schedule

__ Perform tasks with urgency when a timer is set

__ Learn days of the week and months of the year

__ Read an analog clock

__ Show concern for handing in assignments on time

__ Use a school planner

__ Work through a checklist of daily tasks

__ be consistently on time for class and/ or school activities

Organizing and De-cluttering

__ Keep items in proper storage

__ Keep school binders, books, and desk in neat order

__ Gather supplies needed for a task

__ Pick up toys / classroom materials after use

__ Care for belongings

Decision-making Skills

__ Have basic understanding of choices and consequences

__ Able to choose between 2 or 3 selections

__ Prioritize tasks

__ respond to peer pressure appropriately

__ Able to develop pros and cons list when making a decision

Community Living

__ Know personal information (name, address, age, parent's names)

__ Read and follow recipes

__ Understand basic maps and directions

__ Understand a calendar

___ Read and understand prescription labels

___ Understand directional names (up/down, left/ right)

___ Know community signs (washrooms, men/ women, stop, hospital)

___ know key words (danger, poison, warning, caution)

___ Be able to look up information (name and address in a telephone book)

Additional notes:

Life Skills: Food Prep

Student: _____ Date: _____

Prompt Used

H - hand over hand/ physical
G - gesture
V - verbal
I - independent
* If able, also record the number of prompts needed (for each prompt used)

	Prompts used	Comments
Skill		
Opens packaging		
Unscrews lids		
Screws lids on		
Pours liquids		

Can operate a blender		
Can operate hand-mixer		
Spreads with knife		
Makes own lunch		
Gathers ingredients needed		
Gathers utensils needed		
Hand washes dishes and cutlery (loads and unloads dishwasher if applicable)		

Puts away ingredients		
Sweeps floor		
Can set temperature on stove/ oven and monitor cooking		
Sets a timer when cooking food		

Life Skills: Hygiene

Student: _____ Date: _____

Prompt Used

H - hand over hand/ physical
G - gesture
V - verbal
I - independent
* If able, also record the number of prompts needed (for each prompt used)

	Prompts used	Comments
Skill		
Gets and uses a tissue for a runny nose		
Puts tissue in the garbage		

Washes hands after tissue use		
Coughs or sneezes into tissue or elbow		

Life Skills: Classroom Arrival & Departure

Student: _____ Date: _____

Prompt Used

H - hand over hand/ physical
G - gesture
V - verbal
I - independent
* If able, also record the number of prompts needed (for each prompt used)

	Prompts used	Comments
Skill		
Greets (or responds to) teacher, support staff & and peers.		
Unzips/ unbuttons coat		
Takes coat off		

Hangs coat up		
Removes outside footwear		
Puts outside footwear away		
Makes way to desk to begin school day		
Puts inside footwear on		

Gets backpack		
Puts supplies into backpack		
Puts inside footwear in designated location		
Gets coat		
Puts coat on		
Zips/ buttons coat		
Exits the classroom/ heads to bus line up or designated waiting spot		

Life Skills: School Responsibilities

Student: _____ Date: _____

Prompt Used

H - hand over hand/ physical
G - gesture
V - verbal
I - independent
* If able, also record the number of prompts needed (for each prompt used)

	Prompts used	Comments
Skill		
Locates own classroom & designated seat		
Locate own locker (if applicable)		
Recognizes classmates, teacher and any support staff		

Takes books to library		
Locates washroom		
Follows basic school rules (no running in the halls, hands to self, "inside voice")		
Skill	**Prompts used**	**Comments**
Cleans up after eating & activities, garbage goes into garbage		

Enters and Exits school through designates doors		
Takes care of school resources (supplies belonging to the school/ teacher)		
Can locate the school office		

Life Skills: Shopping

Student: _____ Date: _____

Prompt Used

H - hand over hand/ physical
G - gesture
V - verbal
I - independent
* If able, also record the number of prompts needed (for each prompt used)

	Prompts used	Comments
Skill		
Collects and pushes cart		
Recognizes item named (or pictured on list)		
Puts items in cart		

Waits in line to pay for items		
Places items on turn-style checkout counter or conveyor		
Gives cashier monies		
Skill	**Prompts used**	**Comments**
Waits for change (if applicable)		

Puts change in wallet		
Transfers items to vehicle (if applicable)		
Brings items into school		
Puts grocery items away		

Life Skills: Street Safety

Student: _____ Date: _____

Prompt Used

H - hand over hand/ physical
G - gesture
V - verbal
I - independent
* If able, also record the number of prompts needed (for each prompt used)

	Prompts used	Comments
Skill		
Walks on the sidewalk		
Walks on the appropriate side of the road, facing on-coming traffic when no sidewalk		
Uses intersections and crosswalks		

Stops at intersections		
Looks both ways and ensures it is safe before crossing the street		
Obeys WALK and DO NOT WALK signals		

Life Skills: Tooth Brushing Hygiene

Student: _____ Date: _____

Prompt Used

H - hand over hand/ physical
G - gesture
V - verbal
I - independent
* If able, also record the number of prompts needed (for each prompt used)

	Prompts used	Comments
Skill		
Gathers supplies		
Puts toothpaste on brush		
Brushes all teeth		
Spits into sink		

Wipes mouth and checks in mirror to see if mouth/ face is clean		
Rinses brush		
Puts supplies away		

Life Skills: Face Washing

Student: _____ Date: _____

Prompt Used

H - hand over hand/ physical
G - gesture
V - verbal
I - independent
* If able, also record the number of prompts needed (for each prompt used)

	Prompts used	Comments
Skill		
Takes toiletry bag to washroom		
Gets appropriate supplies needed for task out of bag		
Turns on water		
Wets face cloth Soaps face cloth		

Washes face with cloth		
Checks to see if face is clean in mirror		
Rinses cloth		
Hangs cloth to dry		
Dries face and hands		

Life Skills: _____

Student: _____ Date: _____

Prompt Used

H - hand over hand/ physical
G - gesture
V - verbal
I - independent
* If able, also record the number of prompts needed (for each prompt used)

	Prompts used	Comments
Skill		

Physical Education & Movement Assessment

Name: _____ Date: _____

Grade: _____

Observer: _____

Specific Activity: _____

Levels

1- Seldom/ Rarely
2- Emerging/ Occasionally
3- Effective/ Usually
4- Strong/ Frequently
5- Outstanding/ Consistent

Domain: Moving & Doing

Criteria:	1	2	3	4	5
Attendance and punctuality (arrives to class prepared, on time and in proper attire)					
Participates in a variety of activities					
Applies developmentally appropriate techniques for activities - **hand eye coordination**					
Applies developmentally appropriate techniques for activities - **basic movement skills (run/ jump/ roll)**					

Engages in movement, motor, and athletic skill development activities -**tries his/ her best**					
Engages in movement, motor, and athletic skill development activities -**is on task**					
Participates in personal fitness activities					
Works to remain physically active					
Works on his/ her health related fitness (cardiovascular, strength, flexibility, muscular endurance)					
Works on his/her skill related fitness (agility, coordination, speed, power, reaction time)					

Understanding & Applying

Criteria:	1	2	3	4	5
Understands and has the ability to solve movement challenges					
Helps other students (as above)					
Understands and applies game and movement concepts - **Instructions**					
Understands and applies game and movement concepts - **Follows instructions**					

Understands and applies game and movement concepts -**Uses skills and ideas taught in activities**					
Understands and applies group dynamics and concepts of fair play - **contributes to the group**					
Understands and applies group dynamics and concepts of fair play - **is a team player**					
Understands and applies group dynamics and concepts of fair play - **practices sportsmanship**					

Cooperation & Responsibility

Criteria:	1	2	3	4	5
Demonstrates cooperative and socially responsible behaviours - **cares for safety of others**					
Demonstrates personal responsibility - **cares for own safety**					
Demonstrates leadership -**works with and includes others during activity**					
Demonstrates leadership -**considers the views of others during games and play**					
Demonstrates leadership -**lead by positive example**					

Additional notes:

3 Level Physical Education & Movement Assessment

Name: _____ Date: _____

Grade: _____

Specific Activity: _____

Observer: _____

Levels

Always/ most always

Half of the time

Never/ very seldom

Domain: Moving & Doing

Criteria:			
Attendance and punctuality (arrives to class prepared, on time and in proper attire)			
Participates in a variety of activities			

Applies developmentally appropriate techniques for activities - **hand eye coordination**			
Applies developmentally appropriate techniques for activities - **basic movement skills (run/ jump/ roll)**			
Engages in movement, motor, and athletic skill development activities - **tries his/ her best**			
Engages in movement, motor, and athletic skill development activities -**is on task**			
Participates in personal fitness activities			
Works to remain physically active			
Works on his/ her health related fitness (cardiovascular, strength, flexibility, muscular endurance)			
Works on his/her skill related fitness (agility, coordination, speed, power, reaction time)			

Understanding & Applying

Criteria:			

Understands and has the ability to solve movement challenges			
Helps other students (as above)			
Understands and applies game and movement concepts - **Instructions**			
Understands and applies game and movement concepts - **Follows instructions**			
Understands and applies game and movement concepts -**Uses skills and ideas taught in activities**			
Understands and applies group dynamics and concepts of fair play - **contributes to the group**			
Understands and applies group dynamics and concepts of fair play - **is a team player**			
Understands and applies group dynamics and concepts of fair play - **practices sportsmanship**			

Cooperation & Responsibility

Criteria:			

Demonstrates cooperative and socially responsible behaviours - **cares for safety of others**			
Demonstrates personal responsibility - **cares for own safety**			
Demonstrates leadership -**works with and includes others during activity**			
Demonstrates leadership -**considers the views of others during games and play**			
Demonstrates leadership -**lead by positive example**			

Kindergarten Readiness Indicators

Name: _____

Fall Date: _____

Winter Date: _____

Spring Date: _____

Observer: _____

Expressive and Receptive Language

	Fall	Winter	Spring
Speaks in complete sentences most of the time.			
Understands and follows directions with at least two steps.			
Understands vocabulary related to position, direction, size and comparison:			
Like/ different			
Top/ bottom			
First/ last			
Big/ little			
Up/ down			
Makes simple predictions and comments about a story being read.			

Approach to Learning and Cognition

	Fall	Winter	Spring
Matches two like pictures in a set of 5 pictures.			
Classifies (same/ different, alike/ not alike) objects by physical features:			
Shape			
Colour			
Size			
Organizes objects that go together in groups.			
Recognizes copies or repeats patterning sequence.			
Demonstrates the ability to correctly put in order or sequence up to three story pictures.			

Approach to Learning and Cognition Continued

	Fall	Winter	Spring
Participates in repeating a familiar song, poem, finger play and/ or nursery rhyme.			
Retells a simple story after listening to a story with pictures.			

Does simple puzzles (up to 4 pieces).			
Identifies or points to 5 colours.			

Phonological Awareness and Print Knowledge

	Fall	Winter	Spring
Recognizes own name in print.			
Points to and / or recognizes letters in own name.			
Attempts to write letters in own name.			
Recognizes familiar signs, words and logos in the child's environment.			
Book awareness:			
Cover and back of book			
Left to right order			
Words are read top to bottom			
Book handling:			
Holding book right side up			
Beginning / ending			
Identifies two words that rhyme/ sound the same when given rhyming picture words.			

Recognize ten alphabet letter names (may include those in own name) by pointing to requested letter.			
Matches three letters with the sounds they make.			
Uses symbols or drawings to express ideas.			

Mathematics

	Fall	Winter	Spring
Counts number of objects in a small group (up to 5 objects).			
Matches a numeral (0-5) to a group with that number of objects.			
Demonstrates an understanding of "adding to" and "taking away" using objects up to 5.			
Arranges numerals in order 1-5.			
Identifies / points to 3 shapes:			
Circle			
Square			
Triangle			
Counts in sequence 1- 10.			
Understands concepts of more and less up to 5 objects.			

Social/ Emotional

	Fall	Winter	Spring
Identifies self as a boy or girl.			
Knows first and last name.			
Knows parent's names.			
Identifies own age.			
Makes needs known.			
Interacts with other children.			
Demonstrates independence in personal care (washing hands, dressing, and bathroom use).			
Separates from parents by appearing comfortable and secure without parent.			

Physical Development

	Fall	Winter	Spring
Uses writing and drawing tools and child-sized scissors with control and intention.			
Copies figures such as:			
_____ straight line			
▫ circle			
X			
+			

Demonstrates gross motor skills:			
Hops			
Jumps			
Runs			
Catches and bounces a ball			

Academic Assessment Checklists

Lowercase Letter Names and Sounds

Student: _____ Date: _____

Grade: _____ Observer: _____

Letter	Letter Name Y/N	Letter Sound Y/N	If incorrect, letter given	Comments/ Observations
a				
m				
t				
s				
i				
f				
d				
r				
o				
g				
l				
h				
u				
c				

b				
n				
k				
v				
e				
w				
j				
p				
y				
x				
q				
z				

Total correct / 26

Uppercase Letter Names and Sounds

Student: _____ Date: _____

Grade: _____ Observer: _____

Letter	Letter Name Y/N	Letter Sound Y/N	If incorrect, letter given	Comments/ Observations
A				
M				
T				
S				
I				
F				
D				
R				
O				
G				
L				
H				
U				
C				
B				
N				
K				

V				
E				
W				
J				
P				
Y				
X				
Q				
Z				

Total correct / 26

Sight Words Assessment: Pre-primer Level

Student: _____

Grade: _____ Observer: _____

Word	1st Assessment Date _____	2nd Assessment Date_____	3rd Assessment Date _____
a			
and			
away			
big			
blue			
can			
come			
down			
find			
for			
funny			
go			
help			
here			

I			
in			
is			
it			
jump			
little			
look			
make			
me			
Word	1st Assessment Date _____	2nd Assessment Date_____	3rd Assessment Date _____
my			
not			
one			
play			
red			

run			
said			
see			
the			
three			
to			
two			
up			
we			
where			
yellow			
you			

Sight Words Assessment: Primer Level

Student: _____ Grade: _____

Observer: _____

Word	1st Assessment Date _____	2nd Assessment Date_____	3rd Assessment Date _____
all			
am			
are			
at			
ate			
be			
black			
brown			
but			
came			
did			
do			
eat			
four			
get			
good			
have			
he			
into			
like			
must			
new			
no			

Sight Words Assessment: Grade Two

Student: _____ Grade: _____

Observer: _____

Word	1st Assessment Date _____	2nd Assessment Date_____	3rd Assessment Date _____
always			
around			
because			
been			
before			
best			
both			
buy			
call			
cold			
does			
don't			
fast			
first			
five			
found			
gave			
goes			
green			
its			
made			
many			
off			

Sight Words Assessment: Grade Three

Student: _____ Grade: _____

Observer: _____

Word	1st Assessment Date _____	2nd Assessment Date_____	3rd Assessment Date _____
about			
better			
bring			
carry			
clean			
cut			
done			
draw			
drink			
eight			
fall			
far			
full			
got			
grow			
hold			
hot			
hurt			
if			
keep			
kind			
laugh			
light			

Academic Assessment Templates

Draw it! Write it! #1

Student:_____

Date:_____

TOPIC:

_____

Draw it!

Main idea, key words

Write it!

What I learned

1._____

2._____

Draw it! Write it! # 2

Student:_____ Date: _____

TOPIC: _____

Draw it!

Main idea, key words

Write it!

What I have learned

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Extra! Extra! Read All About It!

Student: _____ Date: _____

News Subject:_____

Summary:

What is the main idea?

_____

_____

_____

Who is involved?

_____

_____

_____

Where did the event, discovery, conflict take place?

_____

_____

_____

Extra! Extra! Read All About It!

Student: _____ Date: _____

News Subject: _____

Headline: _____

_____

Keep these questions in mind while you write your summary

What is the main idea?

Who is involved, affected?

When did it happen?

Where did the event, discovery, conflict take place?

Why is it important?

How will it affect the future?

Summary : _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Write On!

Student: _____ Date: _____

TOPIC: _____

Draw a picture in this box to summarize the topic.

Key Words List:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Summarize your learning: Use the terms above in the Key Word List to write a 3 sentences about the topic. Check off the items as you use them. Then circle the terms in your paragraph.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

K-W-L Chart # 1

Student:_____ Date:_____

TOPIC: _____

Know	Wonder	Learn
		

K-W-L Chart # 2

Student: _____ Date: _____

TOPIC:

_____

Know	Wonder	Learn

Academic Assessment Rubrics

Sentence Writing Rubric #1

Student: _____ Date: _____

Needs improvement: Many errors **Fair**: Some errors, don't interfere with meaning

Good: Very few errors **Excellent**: 100% correct, no errors

	Needs improvement	Fair	Good	Excellent
Student begins sentences & names with a capital letter	1	2	3	4
Student ends sentences with appropriate punctuation	1	2	3	4
Student uses spaces between words	1	2	3	4
Student prints a complete sentence that makes sense	1	2	3	4
Student's printing is neat	1	2	3	4
Student uses best guess spelling	1	2	3	4

Total:

Sentence Writing Rubric #2

Student: _____ Date: _____

	Full guidance	Some guidance	Reminders only	Independent
Student begins sentences & names with a capital letter.	1	2	3	4
Student ends sentences with appropriate punctuation.	1	2	3	4
Student uses spaces between words.	1	2	3	4
Student prints a complete sentence that makes sense.	1	2	3	4
Student's printing is neat.	1	2	3	4
Student uses best guess spelling.	1	2	3	4

Total:

Comments:

_____

Sentence Writing Rubric #3

Student: _____ Date: _____

	Needs improvement	Fair	Good	Excellent
Student is able to think of a sentence on his/her own.	1	2	3	4
Student ends sentences with appropriate punctuation.	1	2	3	4
Student has appropriately sized spaces between words.	1	2	3	4
Student prints a complete sentence that makes sense.	1	2	3	4
Student uses phonics skills to sound out words. Reader is able to identify words.	1	2	3	4
Student is able to complete task independently.	1	2	3	4

Total:

Sentence Writing Rubric #4

Student: _____ Date: _____

	Needs improvement	Fair	Good	Excellent
Student ends sentences with appropriate punctuation.	1	2	3	4
There are spaces between words. The space is not too big or small.	1	2	3	4
Student prints a complete sentence that makes sense.	1	2	3	4
Student applies phonics skills to sound out words.	1	2	3	4
Student is able to complete task independently.	1	2	3	4
Words of sentence match picture or topic.	1	2	3	4
Student uses subject/ verb agreement. (He walks, I walk)	1	2	3	4

Total:

Rubric Heading Ideas

1	2	3	4
Novice	Apprentice	Approaching mastery	Expert
Encounter	Engage	Enhance	Embrace
Novice	Apprentice	Journeyman	Master
Dirt road	Pavement	Highway	Yellow brick road
Hmmmm	Needs more	Message clear	Message glows
Strike	Double	Triple	Home run!

Student Self-Assessments

Intermediate Student Self-Assessment Checklist for Group Activity Participation

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Activity: _____

Whole Class Activity _____

Small Group Activity _____

Group Members _____

_____

Think about how well you are working in your group. Place a check mark beside the skills you demonstrate in your role.

_____ I listen attentively to others.

_____ I express my thinking clearly and concisely.

_____ I take turns.

_____ I encourage participation of all group members.

_____ I show respect for alternative points of view.

_____ I can summarize the ideas of others.

_____ I remember significant information.

_____ I can identify issues.

_____ I make connections to prior knowledge and experiences.

_____ I stay on topic.

_____ I take my role as a group member seriously.

Primary Student Self-Assessment Checklist for Group Activity Participation

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Activity: _____
Whole Class Activity _____
Small Group Activity _____

Group Members:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Think about how well you are working in your group. Put a check mark beside the skills that are **true about you** as a group member.

_____ I listen to all other group member.
_____ I talk about my thinking clearly.
_____ I wait my turn to talk.
_____ I encourage all of the group members to share ideas.
_____ I show respect for every ones points of view.
_____ I can retell the ideas of others.
_____ I remember important information.
_____ I make connections to prior knowledge and experiences.
_____ I stay on topic.
_____ I take my role as a group member seriously.

Learning Goals and Success Criteria for

_____

(subject/ topic)

Student:_____ Date: _____

Learning Goal	Criteria for Success	Concept Understanding	How did you do on assessments and homework?	Reflections and Next Steps
				
				

Classroom Expectations Assessment

"I Will Remember To"

Put up my hand

Stay in my seat to work

Work quietly

Daily Goal Tracking Tally:

Student: _____ Date: _____

I didn't put my hand up but called out answer	I was out of my seat at work time	I was distracting my peers and using a loud voice

My Writing Checklist

Name: _____ Date: _____

Subject/ Assignment: _____

I remembered a capital letter at the beginning of my sentences and proper nouns.	Yes	No
I used punctuation at the end of all of my sentences.	Yes	No
I have finger spaces between every word.	Yes	No
My writing makes sense to me.	Yes	No

My Writing Checklist

Name: _____ Date: _____

Subject/ Assignment: _____

I remembered a capital letter at the beginning of my sentences and proper nouns.	Yes	No
I used punctuation at the end of all of my sentences.	Yes	No
I have finger spaces between every word.	Yes	No
My writing makes sense to me.	Yes	No

Student Skill Assessment #1

Student: _____

Date: _____ Grade: _____

Objective/ skill/ task:	Novice: I do not know this	Apprentice: I need more practice	Expert: I understand and can teach this to someone else

- - - -

Student Self-Assessment Rubric

Exceeds

I can do it without mistakes.

I can help others.

Proficient

I can do it by myself!

I make little mistakes.

Developing

Sometimes I need help.

I am starting to understand.

Novice

I can't do it by myself.

I don't understand yet.

Student Observation Sheet # 1

Student: _____ Date: _____

Teacher: _____ Observer: _____

Subject(s): _____

Time	Rating	Comments

Rating Codes:

T - on task
M - motor off task
V - verbal off task
P - passive off task

Totals:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Percents:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Student Observation Sheet # 2

Student: _____ Date: _____
Teacher: _____ Observer: _____
Subject/ Class: _____ Activity: _____
Time begin: _____ Time end: _____

Time	Behaviour/ Action	Results

Quick-Pick Formative Assessments

Quick-Pick Formative Assessments

The following pages contain activities, actions, or tasks that educators can use to have students demonstrate their learning and knowledge. These quick formative assessments can be done with a whole class, small group, or individually. Data on who indicates understanding and who can verbalize understanding can be recorded if necessary.

Thumbs up! Thumbs down!

Students signal with their thumbs to indicate their level of understanding regarding a concept, process, topic, or question. Thumbs up - I am confident that I understand and can explain this. Thumbs sideways - I am not fully sure that I understand this. Thumbs down - I am confused or do not understand this.

Sticky Note Summaries

Students are given a sticky note (or small piece of paper) to write a mini summary on a topic or record their answer to a question, define a vocabulary word, or work out an arithmetic problem. As an adaptation, students may be able to draw an image rather than write their answer.

Wacky Webs

Have students create their own web with the main topic in the center and points surrounding it, or use a template graphic organizer to showcase their knowledge about a topic.

Student - Teacher Conferences

One on one conversation with a student to check level of understanding and clear up misconceptions or guide future teaching/ learning focus. This conference may include specific questions and a checklist to track data.

Exit Ticket

A written (or verbal response) to a question, or questions given at the end of a lesson or at the end of the day on the way out the door. These tickets give a snapshot of what students know about a topic. Since these happen at the end of a lesson or the end of the day feedback is not immediate and the data collected may indicate a need for re-teaching.

Journal Entry

Students record their thoughts and understanding on a topic, lesson, or concept in a journal. Teacher reviews student writing to check for levels of understanding.

ABC Summaries

Students are assigned a letter of the alphabet and must select a word starting with that letter that is related to the topic or theme being studied.

Rotating Review

Divide the class into two groups (A and B), have the students in each group partnered with a peer from the other group (AB). The pair will work with each other for a short time so have them configured so they can easily move to the next partner (lined up across from each other, at a desk, small circle inside bigger circle, etc). Each pair of facing students will quiz their partners with a few questions they have written on a given topic or theme. After a given time, the predetermined A or B partners move to a new partner and repeat the 'quiz' process. * Note: the students need to have the correct answers to each question they ask to lessen the chance of misinformation being passed along. As an alternate assessment, have students parrot or paraphrase correct answers back to their peer to deepen the understanding.

Game Show Review

Pose a question or problem or spelling word (or ask for a definition) to the class or small group and have them write their answers on mini white boards or chalk boards, then turn the boards to the teacher for evaluation. This allows the educator to make quick checks of knowledge, take quick notes or give immediate feedback to each student. Students can also have more than one chance to get the answer correct.

Group Game Show Review

Create teams and pose a question, problem, spelling word, or vocabulary definition. Allow students to discuss response as a group, then one representative from the group (which changes after each turn) gets to present an answer. Correct answers get 1 point, incorrect answers allow the other team to 'steal' the question and have a chance to give a correct answer for a point.

Think-Pair-Share

Pose a question to students and allow enough time to think about it then have them discuss ideas or answers with a partner, then share with a larger group, another pairing or the whole class.

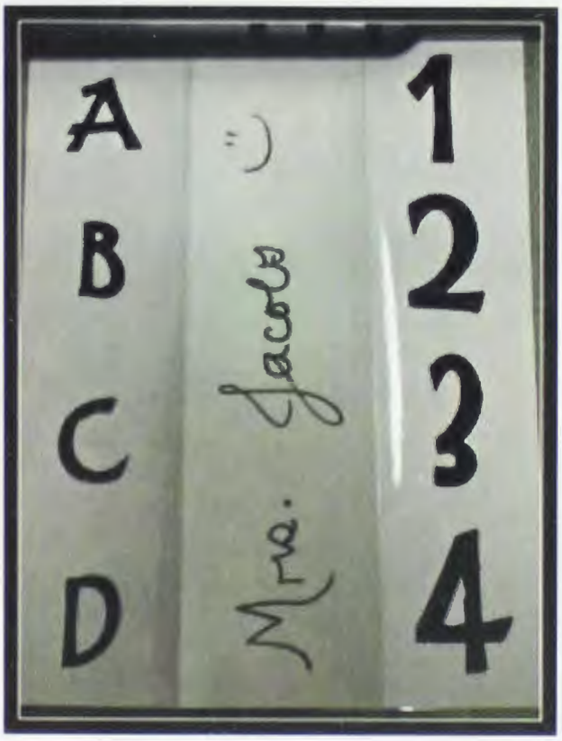
Ponder & Pass

Tell students the topic of an upcoming unit, and then pass a note pad or sticky note to each student in the class. Challenge each student to do one (or more) of the following:

> My background and experience (connection) to this topic is...
>
> In relation to this topic, I want to learn specifically about...
>
> My feelings about his topic are...

Multi Assessment Folder

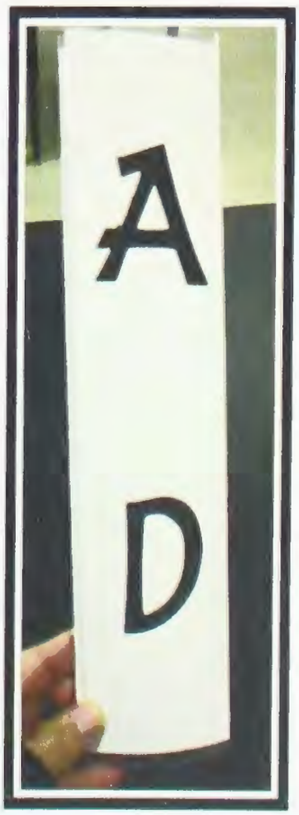
Front



back

For multiple choice answers 1, 2, 3, or 4

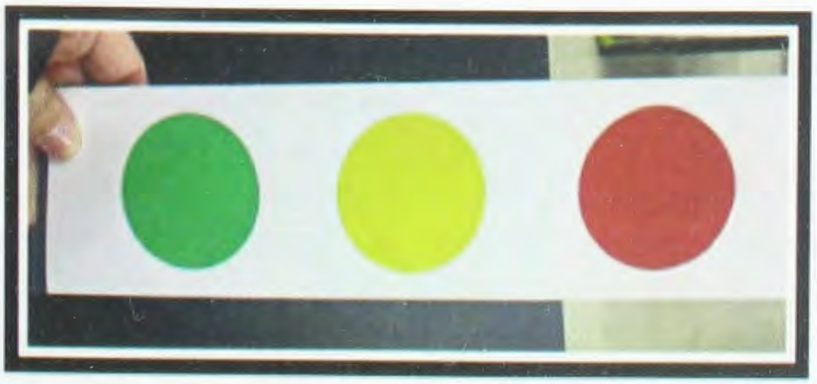
Agree or disagree



For multiple choice answers A, B, C or D

True or false

Red light- I'm stuck
Yellow light - I think I have it, but please come check
Green light - I've got it!



*Students can simply point to their choice with a finger or use a clothes pin to clip to the paper 'pointing' to their choice.

Adaptations and Accommodations Checklist

Student: _____

Age: _____ Grade: _____

Teacher(s): _____

Adaptations for Presentation of Subject Matter

Before the Lesson

___Introduce new vocabulary prior to lesson (provide glossary of terms, visual aids, charts, Word Walls, etc.)
___Provide an overview of content at the beginning of lesson
___Discuss expected learning at the beginning of lesson
___Check to see if student's need help getting started
___Assign a buddy to help student get started, or when needed
___Allow student to use a mini whiteboard/ sticky note to make a checklist of steps to check off in order to complete tasks or assignments
___ Teach/ re-teach student how to get help (ask a peer when appropriate, use help sign, put hand up, refer back to instructions, etc.)
_____Begin teaching at a level that ensure success for student, then gradually increase difficulty
_____Review previous essential works
_____Pre-teach important vocabulary
_____Provide model of finished product

During the Lesson

_____Promote student engagement by actively involving student, asking questions, breaking up the lesson with partner sharing, discussion, or structured response
_____Chunk the information into steps, monitor student comprehension often
_____Use visual, auditory, oral, physical or proximity clues (multisensory) during lesson

_____Record important ideas on chart paper or whiteboard. Use different coloured markers for emphasis
_____Provide graphic organizers for note-taking
_____Provide a copy of lesson notes
_____Demonstrate note-taking strategies
_____Allow time for processing information and concepts
_____Introduce one concept at a time
_____Minimize the number of instructions, use simple language/ directives
_____Duplicate written instructions
_____Emphasize visual presentation to complement written instruction
_____Provide a reader to read instructions
_____Provide close monitoring/feedback
_____Provide cross-age/peer assistance
_____Provide learning materials at student's level of comprehension
_____Provide organizers for note-taking or highlight important information in text
_____Provide outline to be completed as assignment framework
_____Model-prompt-practice
_____Opportunity for rehearsal
_____Provide tapes of instruction for review
_____Tape lecture or allow student to tape
_____Reduce language or reading level
_____Use alternative text
_____Peer reading activities
_____Teacher reads to group
_____Have class note taker
_____Use graphic organizers
_____Actively monitor seat work
_____Computer assisted instruction
_____Provide reader support to read texts
_____Use manipulatives
_____Use direct instruction strategies
_____Use of visual cues/cards to aid memory/recall
_____Avoid asking student to read out loud
_____Co-operative buddy
_____Vary activity levels
_____provide high contrast markers on whiteboard (avoid colour); use whiteboard instead of chalkboard

_____Verbalize written content as notes are presented on the board or using media devises e.g. Smartboard, projector
_____Use flow charts, concept mapping, and other visual teaching processes
_____Allow for frequent movement breaks during instruction

After the Lesson

____Repeat, paraphrase, summarize main points/ vocabulary of lesson
____Have students repeat, paraphrase, summarize main points/ vocabulary of lesson (as a whole group, or in pairs or small groups)
____Give students a summary of important information from the lesson with blanks to be filled in.
____Use cooperative learning strategies such as *think-pair-share* or *jigsaw* for review
____Have students write down key concepts (in point form) that was included in the lesson
____Meet one-on-one with students who have questions/ do not fully understand lesson
_____Provide assignments in alternate format
_____Embed rewards into activities
_____Provide incentives for beginning and completing activities and assignments

Adaptations for Assignments

_____Provide examples for students to refer to
_____Grade responses separate from content and mechanics
_____Adjust length of classroom assignments
_____Allow additional time for assignments
_____Use alternate assignments that do not require writing
_____Directions in small distinct steps
_____Post daily assignments with due dates
_____Reduce paper and pencil tasks
_____Tape directions for student
_____Allow recorded assignments
_____Offer Alternative Assignment
_____Avoid peer editing correcting

_____Avoid penalizing for spelling and/or penmanship
_____Marked assignments - remarks or comments should be accessible; use tactile or 'scented' stickers in place of a stamp or check mark
_____Allow written responses to be printed in a size and spacing that is comfortable for the student, as long as it legible and neat
_____Support to establish priority checklist for assignments
_____Allow student to use a computer or voice recording device to provide answers to assignments
_____Provide immediate feedback on all assignments

Adaptations to Environment

_____Alternate seating arrangement to reduce distraction
_____Independent study/Self-directed learning
_____Provide compact curriculum to enable special focus on special unit of study or theme
_____Provide instruction in small group setting
_____Provide program in alternate setting
_____Utilize fast tracking/early completion
_____Seat for staff proximity
_____Provide second desk to allow movement
_____Seat by appropriate peer models
_____Provide structured routine
_____Define areas concretely
_____Allow for partial participation
_____Allow for easy access to necessary equipment
_____Provide seat/ desk appropriate for meeting needs
_____Seat in proximity to teacher/ support staff

Adaptations to Materials

_____Use a scribe to assist with writing
_____Allow headphones/earplugs to improve time on task
_____Allow student to use the "accessibility options" that are commonly found in word processor programs
_____Each student to use word prediction with word abbreviation software

_____Provide access to print materials through tapes, on CD-ROM, the web/Internet
_____Provide computer software writing aids
_____Provide talking calculators or on-screen calculator programs
_____Provide videotaped lessons/tutorials
_____Teach student to use outlining/planning software to assist with organizing
_____Teach student to use personal data managers, handheld calendars or planners
_____Use a scanner to enter text into word processor format
_____Use a spreadsheet program to assist with calculations
_____Use books on tape
_____Use calculator
_____Use headphones to reduce distractions
_____Use of audio tape recorder to provide instructions on tasks
_____Use of audio tape to record assignment material and responses
_____Use spell-checking programs
_____Use technology to reduce mobility/motor challenges
_____Use text to speech, speech synthesizer, and screen readers
_____Student use word prediction software program to assist writing assignments
_____Use word processor to assist with writing
_____Highlight text
_____Keep supplies needed for each class within that classroom if student required to switch rooms for additional classes
_____Type teacher materials
_____Use large print, illustrations, colour
_____Study guides
_____Colour coded notebooks
_____One notebook or binder with dividers
_____Limited number of items in or around desk
_____Home set of texts
_____Enlarged worksheets
_____Use social stories
_____Use alternate paper: bold dark-lined, raised lined, bold or larger graph paper
_____Use tactile models or real items for concept building, rather than diagrams

_____HB3 dark lead pencils, fine tip washable felt pens, erasable pens, good contrasting writing utensils
_____ Use real coinage when teaching money identification
_____Provide accessible time source when teaching time
_____Allow students to use cue cards with steps for working through activities

Adaptations for Testing

_____Allow student response on test to be recorded on audio/video tape
_____Allow student to respond to test questions using speech-to-text software
_____Allow support from reader
_____Allow support from scribe
_____Allow use of assistive technology
_____Provide separate setting to allow for alternate test taking
_____Provide separate setting to reduce distraction(s)
_____Provide supervised breaks
_____Provide tests on audio tape
_____Use oral answers
_____Use oral questions
_____Test take before or after school
_____Shortened length of testing
_____Divide test into sections
_____Offer pre-tests
_____Use clear simple language in instructions
_____Use of personal technology
_____Allow student to practice using adaptations before actual/final test
_____Allow the use of cue cards
_____Pre-teach testing skills
_____Provide additional time to complete tests
_____Provide cues or mnemonic devices
_____Provide open book testing
_____Provide oral testing, when appropriate
_____Provide sample or practice testing
_____Provide written tests in large print, screen reader, or audiotape
_____Reduce the number of test questions on same outcome
_____Vary the type and structure of the test to meet
_____Avoid using scantron or "bubble" style answer sheets

_____Make use of adaptive technologies available to the student for testing purposes
_____Provide true/ false tests
_____Provide multiple choice tests
_____Allow for open book tests
_____Underline or highlight important words in directions
_____Put the easiest questions first, gradually increase difficulty of questions
_____Use symbols on the tests that help students follow directions (arrows, stop signs, stars for important items)

Adaptations for Transition Times

_____Prepare students for transitions
_____Provide a list of, or discuss several times behavioural expectations
_____Have students gather all supplies needed before transition occurs
_____Use visual timers (to prompt for upcoming transitions, and time left during transitions)
_____Include music or sound support during transition, when music stops, transition is over
_____Use visual schedules

Adaptations for Self-Management

_____Encourage meta-cognitive strategies
_____Use self-monitoring procedures in class
_____Use daily schedules
_____Have open dialogue about disability
_____Teach test taking strategies
_____Provide accessible visual schedules
_____"Take a break" cards for student to indicate when he/she needs a break
_____Create private cues and prompts with student
_____Allow the use of fidget items (when used according to expectations)
_____Use agenda to record assignments/ dates/ things to remember

Adaptations for Social Interaction Supports

_____Use penpal
_____Provide explanations of nonverbal/gestural communication (e.g. Interpret why everyone is laughing) Explain nuances of facial communication and body position during communication
_____Create Social Skills group for practicing social situations and providing opportunities for authentic socialization

Vision

_____increase contrast markings
_____Provide preferential or adapted locker/cubby
_____Promote use of low vision aides and adapted materials
_____Enlarge worksheets/ tests/ paper work
_____Allow student to move to a location they can better see from
_____Request a Functional Vision assessment from Teacher for Visually Impaired to find out student preferences, font, size of print &/or paper colour

Hearing

_____Have FM system installed in the room
_____Use visuals to support instruction
_____Use closed captioning when playing visuals
_____Give directions orally and in writing

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Chapter 1 introduced the concept of my project along with the need for a comprehensive assessment tool that can be used to determine the progress of students with exceptionalities in BC public schools. Chapter 2 reviewed the current literature related to assessment of students with alternative learning needs, including the methods of assessment used in schools around the world. In Chapter 3, the research methods conducted to determine what local educators want in terms of an assessment tool were described and discussed. Chapter 4 presented the results from my findings based on the content analysis of colleague conversations. In Chapter 5 I presented the handbook, including information on assessing students with exceptionalities, as well as a number of assessments relevant to academic, functional skills, and behavioural development. In this chapter, I provide a brief overview of the study followed by recommendations based on the study research and subsequent handbook's contribution to scholarly knowledge. This chapter also includes a discussion on limitations, as well as a section on implications for educators. The chapter concludes with suggestions for areas of future research.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine what BC educators would find useful in relation to alternative assessments for students with diverse learning needs. As a Special Education teacher, I spend a great deal of time with teachers each year helping to plan and implement programming for students with exceptionalities. Determining a starting point involves uncovering student competency levels and finding a baseline for each student at the beginning of the school year. Because of the diverse learning needs of the students in my

school district, the question driving my research was: What do educators require to assess the learning needs of students with exceptionalities? This research study consisted of analyzing 200 educational text segments, and taking part in impromptu conversations with 41 educators about student assessment. After the process of recording, coding and analyzing the data, four themes were created, which acted as the foundation for the alternative assessment handbook I created.

Recommendations

Assessment is used by educators to track student learning and ability. There are an array of student abilities; therefore, alternative assessment resources are necessary to inform teachers of all student progress. Students with alternative learning needs require assessments that are specific to their learning styles, and may vary from standard assessment tools. This is where my assessment handbook will come in handy; having a comprehensive resource that covers a wide range of evaluation topics will ease the assessment load on teachers.

The recommendations that I have for this handbook are that it be useful and freely shared with educators. The templates are not student-specific and can be used for typical students as well as learners with various exceptionalities. I suggest that educators who use this book find assessments that they like, and make them components of their evaluation repertoire, or utilize the templates within the handbook as a guide to formulate their own assessments.

The school district where this study took place has the capacity to support educators who voiced concern over a lack of alternative assessment resources. Some suggestions to

support educators in the quest for alternative assessment resource creation and development include: (a) local chairpersons reminding teaching staff of the districts Mentorship program where staff can apply for funding to meet with other educators and discuss, or create alternative assessment, (b) the school district administration providing release time for resource personnel to engage in weekly collaborative processes, within their own schools, or with colleagues from others schools and (c) the administration using funds to connect educators with experts from out-of-district during professional development days.

Reflections

The participants of this study, and subsequent comments, interests, and experiences represent a small sample of public school educators, from one school district in British Columbia. More female (n=37) than male (n=4) educators participated in this research. In relation to the educators I consulted, I would have preferred to speak with additional male educators, as their perspective on alternative assessments might have been different than the majority of female contributors I spoke to. If I were to conduct future research in this area, I would make a concerted effort to seek out, and interview more male educators in order to have an equal male-to-female contributor's ratio.

The number of educators contacted during the research portion of this study was 41. Thinking more globally, and considering the number of educators in BC, 41 is a very small sample of the population. I suspect that consulting a larger number of educators, from across the province of British Columbia might have gave my findings more weight; however, I believe that the four themes I uncovered in my small study were adequate as a

foundation for my handbook. Although I am pleased with the results of the study and my handbook, additional research may provide supplementary ideas.

When reviewing the literature on alternative assessment options, much of the research was American and pertained to normative, standardized testing. The lack of Canadian studies and research related to the assessment of students with exceptionalities was disappointing. The lack of Canadian research studies based on students with alternative learning and assessment needs, supports the rationale for this research project.

Implications

It is my desire that the tools within the handbook will become part of teachers' evaluation repertoires, and allow them to get a better picture of what the students they are assessing can, or cannot do. I also hope that by using these tools, educators can be more successful at tracking IEP goals, and writing goal progress reports, which can be a confusing process when the student is new to the classroom. It is my goal to have this handbook available for educators in my school district who are looking for a quick-reference, alternative assessment resource.

I believe that my assessment handbook addresses some of the concerns that educators have in determining what students with exceptionalities know, and can do independently. First of all, my handbook gives educators choice in the assessments they can use to evaluate student learning. There are a number of assessments to use in relation to tracking academic proficiencies, functional life skills, and behaviour. Once educators know what domain areas they want to assess, there are many assessments to choose from to help them discover students' ability levels.

Secondly, the handbook is easy to use and the assessments can be used as-is, or altered to meet specific educator need. In many instances the assessments within the handbook can also be used as a guide so educators can create their own student-specific assessments from those they see in the book. The table of contents is clearly written, and the assessment templates within are easy to fill out. I suspect that educators who do not have a lot of experience with locating, or creating assessments for students with exceptionalities, will find the evaluation process difficult and at times overwhelming and the availability of this comprehensive resource will be appreciated. I predict that the availability of an alternative assessment resource will allow educators to assess the growth and development of a wide variety of students in their classrooms.

Considerations for Future Research

The research conducted in this study expands on previous research related to alternative assessment options for educators. In the event that future research is conducted in this area of study, some considerations for future research might include: (a) increasing the number of data sources by contacting more educators from a larger sample of the provincial population (b) employing a different approach to data collection by conducting face-to-face interviews, or questionnaires, and (c) collecting data from a more gender-balanced population. Future considerations might also include re-interviewing educators after they have used some of the alternative assessment tools within the handbook. The purpose could be to determine which tools were most useful, or other areas of need.

Contributions to Knowledge

The results of this study show that educators from my school district require alternative assessment options and tools that meet the needs of a variety of students. Information from the study could be used by school district administration to support their educational staff through supporting school-based team inquiry projects, professional development focus groups, or a foundation for district Professional Learning Community (PLC) organizations.

A benefit of this study was collating the data to determine educator needs. From a personal perspective, as a result of the research I conducted, I have developed a better understanding of what educators need to best serve the diverse students they teach. This knowledge, and the subsequent handbook I created, has allowed me to take information from an abundance of sources and create a meaningful, and useful resource that will benefit me, my colleagues, and the exceptional students of the school district in which I work. The process of creating this project allowed me to draw together ideas and information to develop an assessment tool that can be used by any educator. Working through this project has allowed me to take ideas from others, and locate or create tools that my colleagues would find useful. I have enjoyed developing a resource that meets the needs of a variety of educators. I have found personal value in creating something that benefits me as a Special Education teacher, and something tangible that I can give to the staff I work with to assist them with tracking and determining student progress.

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Appendix A Sample of Recorded Data and Initial Phase of Coding

"Alternative assessments provide the opportunity to create an accountability system that includes all students. The alternate assessment is one additional tool to drive improved instruction"	promote inclusion
"Differentiated assessment is a continual process through which teachers gather data before, during, and after instruction from multiple sources to identify learners' needs and strengths"	ongoing
"The process of assessment can be seen as a way of describing or defining people- about telling a person's story in terms of what they can do and how they do it"	proof
"tools that are time consuming, like a check-list"	quick
"show parents a snapshot of their learner, I need something that proves how they are doing"	proof
"Photocopiable, something I can reuse"	multi-use
"looks the same as the assessments I use for the other students, but specific to the students I am looking at"	student-specific
"something I can show the student that tracks their behaviour, a visual support so the student can see where they are struggling or how many times they display behaviour"	visual

Appendix B Sample of Colour Coded Data

Targeted treatment
Multiple data sources
Fair to all students
Comparable opportunities
Consistency
Meaningful assessments
Observations systematic and meaningful
Observations – as pre-evaluation data
Observations – authentic
Observations – truest measure
Pre-assessment – early detection
Pre-assessment – classify needs
snapshot
Consistent standards
Reference tool
Task analysis
Judge mastery (accuracy)
quick
quick
easy
evidence/ proof of earning
goal-specific
easy
easy
adaptable
easy
Real-world activities
multi-use
easy
quick
visual
visual
diverse
Meaningful tasks
Student ability
Treatment plan
Strategic approach
Multiple-step process

Appendix B Sample of Colour Coded Data

Targeted treatment
Multiple data sources
Fair to all students
Comparable opportunities
Consistency
Meaningful assessments
Observations systematic and meaningful
Observations – as pre-evaluation data
Observations – authentic
Observations – truest measure
Pre-assessment – early detection
Pre-assessment – classify needs
snapshot
Consistent standards
Reference tool
Task analysis
Judge mastery (accuracy)
quick
quick
easy
evidence/ proof of earning
goal-specific
easy
easy
adaptable
easy
Real-world activities
multi-use
easy
quick
visual
visual
diverse
Meaningful tasks
Student ability
Treatment plan
Strategic approach